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HIGH AND LOW;

OR,

LIFE'S CHANCES AND CHANGES.

BY THE HON. HENRY COKE,

AUTHOR OF

“A RIDE OVER THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HIGH AND LOW.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Pierce More awoke, the sun was shining brightly into the room. The boots, who had entered without seeing him, was opening the windows to let out the smell of stale smoke. The empty grate looked uncomfortable; the two tumblers, with a little sticky brown syrup at the bottom, looked uncomfortable; a pair of thin debauched teaspoons, weighing about as much as a sixpence between them, item, one pair of cigar ends, also looked uncomfortable. The boots, who had

not yet washed his face, looked uncomfortable; and as he stirred about the furniture, clouds of light dust danced merrily in the broad rays of the sunlight, making the whole room look uncomfortable.

“Holloa, you! What are you opening the windows for?” shouted Pierce, shivering with cold and buttoning his coat over his chest.

The dirty boots jumped.

“Beg pardon, Sir—didn’t see as you was there, Sir. Like the windows shut down, Sir?”

“Where’s my bed-room?”

“Yis, Sir.”

“And I want to be called at ten.”

“Yis, Sir.”

“And I shall want a chaise directly I have had my breakfast.”

“Yis, Sir. Pair ’osses, Sir?”

“Yes, a pair of horses to go to Mona.”

“Yis, Sir. Take tea or coffee, Sir?”

“Coffee.”

“ Good night, Sir.”

“ Good night. Halloa ! I say, boots !”

“ Yis, Sir.”

“ What o’clock is the gentleman going to breakfast, who dined with me last night ?”

“ Bin gone this two hours—went away at half-past five—first train, Sir. Good night, Sir.”

When Pierce was left to sleep, he found he had slept enough. As he lay in bed, he examined the pattern of the paper, till he had transformed every flower, and querly-queue, into a goblin face, or figure. By the time he had made himself unpleasantly nervous with this amusement, his attention began to wander to the busy flies ; who chased each other round and round, always buzzing hysterically whenever they met. This gave him endless range for speculation ; his brain grew bewildered in contemplation of eccentric vortices, and Cartesian systems ; till he became excited with thoughts

of the crash there would be, if two planets came in contact at the nodes of their orbits, as these flies did, every round they took. At last it occurred to him he was not in his usual bed ; in fact, it struck him very forcibly that he was at an inn at Conway—that he had come there to meet Winter—that he had, as well as he could recollect, gone to sleep in an arm-chair—had woke up feeling cold—had now got an headache, and so on. What his last night's conversation had been, he could not remember.

All he could recal was, that he had talked a great deal about Lady Eda. Then an indistinct notion of money matters occurred to him ; and then a distinct reminiscence of signing a paper. But, whether this paper was a bill, or a check—he had no remembrance whatever. He was fresher after breakfast, and in exuberant spirits when he found himself rattling along in the chaise which took him back to Mona. They were

all pleased to see him again, especially, as he thought, Lady Eda. She said she was so glad he was come, because she had made arrangements for a pic-nic next day at the Manor House. They were all to ride there to lunch : and after luncheon to fish for trout in the burn.

Accordingly, as had been settled, the horses were brought round next morning, and the party prepared for a start. It was arranged that Eda, under the chaperonage of Mr. Gregory, was to have command of the party—Lady Dorothy and Miss Fitzbun were to drive in the pony phaeton, and take charge of the fishing-rods and luncheon. More was to ride the Hornet, Lady Eda the Erl King, Arthur a hunter of his own, Mr. Gregory a gentle hack of his lordship's, and Sir Andrew was (at his own request) furnished with a pet pony of my lady's, which she hardly ever rode, but which followed her like a dog when she went out walking.

The phaeton had started, and the rest of the party began to mount. Sir Andrew, anxiously watching for the occasion, hustled up to Lady Eda, and begged her (Pierce could have knocked his head off for doing so) to place her foot in his hand, while he lifted her to her seat. She smiled good-naturedly, and replied he might make himself very useful, if he would hold the saddle on the other side. Before, however, he had time to get round, her ladyship, without the aid of any one, sprang from the ground, and turned to look at Fitzbun, whose brains had as near as possible been kicked out, in consequence of his having touched the Erl King's tail as he was passing behind.

Lady Eda laughed, and rode on with the other three gentlemen; but Ginger, the pet pony, being over-eager to follow his stall-mates, would not stand still for Sir Andrew to cross his back. After many unsuccessful

attempts—much to the amusement of the groom, who did his best to hold the pony with one hand, and give the worthy baronet a lift with the other—Fitzbun was obliged to shout to the party ahead, to stop a minute till he was in his saddle. Lady Eda, seeing the cause of Ginger's obstreperous behaviour, turned back; and desired Arthur to get off and help him up. Arthur was soon at his side; and taking Sir Andrew by the leg, with the word, "Now then, together," gave this stout gentleman such a hoist, that, with the combined effects of his own elastic jump, the baronet was shot over the saddle, and landed (fortunately on the softest part of his person) the other side of the pony.

A man of his weight must, one would think, have been greatly shaken; but as Lady Eda was looking on, he treated the importunities of Arthur, and the rest of the party, with ineffable contempt. The next

effort was more successful ; and the cavalcade rode on, not a whit out of humour in consequence of the accident, which might have proved more serious.

The conversation mainly referred to the comparative merits of the different horses. Pierce was playfully bantering Lady Eda on the dullness of her animal as compared to the one he rode. In truth, the Hornet was a thoroughbred of the highest mettle ; and as he caracoled—prancing and lunging out his neck—showed himself off to advantage, and seemed proud of the perfect hand, and seat of his rider.

“The Erl King is the better jumper of the two. The Hornet is too young, and rushes blindly at his work. See,” said Lady Eda, “here’s a stiff little fence. I’ll take the Erl King over it ; watch how quietly he tops it.”

“Stop, let me go first,” said Pierce, “there may be a ditch the other side !” but before

he had finished speaking, Lady Eda was cantering away for the gate.

“Wo! way! Stop him, somebody! Murder!” But it was no use. Ginger had seen his mistress leave the company, and determined to follow. Sir Andrew, with his hat off, and arms round the pony’s neck, was shouting for help. Pierce had only just time to get out of the way, when Ginger and Fitzbun charged gallantly into the thickest part of the thorn fence. Ginger soon delivered himself of his rider; and, leaving Sir Andrew unable to move for the thorns, cocked his tail, threw his heels into the air, and was soon by the side of Lady Eda.

“I say, More—Longvale — oh! — Can’t you — oh! — give us a—oh!—hand—will you? What a beastly little fool this pony is! There!” said the unhappy man, at last dragged from the hedge, “I believe my body is a regular pin-cushion. I shan’t be able to ride any farther—indeed I shan’t.”

“ Well,” said Longvale, “ when you catch up the carriage, we can put you in, and tie the pony behind.”

Comforted with this assurance, Sir Andrew again mounted the unruly Ginger; and upon overtaking the phaeton was, to his inexpressible delight, deposited there till they reached the Manor House.

The chapter of accidents was, however, not yet ended. In fact, it was easy to predict, that this cross-country scamper would, in the natural course of events, terminate in some catastrophe. Lady Eda, on all occasions easily exhilarated, felt now the additional spur of competition; and would—if she had not been dissuaded by Pierce and Mr. Gregory—have left the bridle-road for a straight cut over the fields; leaping with delight any obstacle which might confront her. Determined, at any rate, to have one good jump before they reached the Manor House, she guided the party over a common, the path

from which she knew to be obstructed by a gate always kept locked ; and which somebody would have to leap in order to fetch the key from the neighbouring farm-house, to let Mr. Gregory through.

She laughed at the trap she had betrayed them into ; but would listen to no remonstrances from any of the party. Longvale's hack was incapable of leaping anything so high, but Pierce drew back to clear the gate at a fly. Lady Eda, without observing his intention, put her horse's head at the gate, and with a sharp cut on his flanks, threw herself back, and gave the Erl King the reins. The noble animal, well aware of his rider's resolution, never threatened to refuse ; but, gathering himself together, made two strides, and bounding into the air strained every muscle to clear the leap. Unfortunately, the impetus of half-a-dozen yards was insufficient to carry him over ; his knees struck the top rail, and horse and

rider were hurled to the ground. This was the work of an instant. Pierce had already touched the sides of the fiery Hornet with his spurs, and was in full speed at the moment Lady Eda was falling to the ground. He had no power to stop his horse—no time to swerve him. His whole mind was paralyzed by the rapidity of the accident. The Hornet cleared the gate without a graze, and, to the appalling terror of his rider, lighted where Lady Eda had been thrown; so that her body was immediately between the fore and hind legs of the animal. He thought he heard Longvale cry, "He has killed her!" Quick as lightning he pulled the Hornet on his haunches; and, throwing himself from the saddle, stood aghast over the prostrate form of the girl.

Happily, More's horse had not touched her; and, being light, the gentle speed at which she was thrown, enabled her to escape less injured than alarmed. She soon re-

gained her feet; and laughing merrily at the anxiety displayed in Pierce's features, whipped the dirt from her habit, and desired that gentleman to catch her horse.

The key being procured, and Mr. Gregory allowed to pass, the party finally arrived at the Manor House in safety, and in high spirits. Lady Dorothy and Miss Fitzbun had industriously prepared for the reception of the riders: and, dismissing the groom with the horses, the ladies sat down on the dry grass, while the gentlemen made themselves as generally useful, and as particularly agreeable, as they could. Sir Andrew obstinately persisted in besieging Lady Eda with salad, and bread, and many other things she did not want. Arthur, with his wonted amiability, took charge of his aunt and Miss Fitzbun; but Pierce, excessively indignant at the obsequious interference of the "porpoise," disposed of him at last by letting off a ginger-beer bottle, and hitting him with

deadliest aim, straight in the eye. He himself was more than ever attentive, because he felt he had some amends to make, for accidentally placing Lady Eda in the dangerous position from which she had so narrowly escaped. Her ladyship, whether somewhat tired of the exclusive enjoyment of his society, or unwilling too openly to encourage his addresses, took every opportunity to favour Arthur with her remarks, and commands. Even her most trivial observations were graciously directed to her cousin; and so marked did her preference become at last, that it caused the two young men, as if by an act of their own free agency, to change the seats they at first occupied. Arthur, whose spirits had hitherto been but moderately boisterous, now became uproarious. Pierce, on the other hand, was completely chapfallen, and so abstracted in his own gloomy thoughts, that Lady Dorothy was as near as possible going into hysterics

before he was made aware that he had set down the wine hamper on the top of her gouty toe. He would speak to nobody, and was beginning to cast a damp on the spirits of the whole party. He asked permission to smoke, which was granted by everybody except Lady Eda.

"Very well," he said; "I am sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of my society, but I must go and smoke my pipe in retirement."

"Pray do," said Lady Eda; and without looking to see if he went, said something in a whisper to Arthur.

Pierce was a long time smoking, and though he only half turned his head in the direction of Lady Eda, he could see she very often turned hers to look steadily at him. He came back to the party, but still was silent. Lady Eda, he fancied, was beginning to relent. She spoke to him once or twice, in a kindly tone of voice; he

answered her surlily like a bear. She asked him to bring a plaid; he pitched it towards her, but it fell short. She looked annoyed. He was obliged for civility's sake to get up and take it to her. He presented it with a formal bow, and seated himself at a little distance. She asked him some question. He answered with a polite and bitter smile, and walking away, observed :

“If anybody wanted to fish, they had better begin, for it was getting late.”

The proposition was seconded by Longvale; and the rods were soon put together. They had not far to go, for that beautiful trout stream so well known in Wales, as the ——, ran whirling and dancing at the foot of the valley, not a hundred yards below them. Lady Eda was reckoned by the learned in such matters to be a piscatrix of the most dexterous order; so that she only permitted Pierce to tie on her flies, but would not condescend to have further assistance from any one. It was

settled that she was to fish up-stream, and that Arthur and Pierce were to keep at a respectable distance behind her.

On both sides, the banks were rocky and impracticable; and it was no easy matter to walk near enough to the water without the fisher showing himself, so as to frighten his finny game. They had scrambled on for nearly a quarter of a mile, when the foremost rod came to a standstill, and was overtaken by the two young men. Lady Eda, who fished from some loose stones, desired that she might not be approached as a good fish had just risen. Her command was of course obeyed, and the next cast she hooked a heavy trout. The harder it tugged, the more she laughed, and wound him up; then round flew the reel again. The fish darted up-stream; Lady Eda followed; but the loose stones slipped from under her, and, catching one foot between the rocks, sprained her ankle as she fell.

Both the gentlemen rushed to the spot, and found her in such pain that she was totally unable to speak. She could not bear to be touched, and motioned them to go away. It was evident she must be carried back to some place, whence the pony-carriage could fetch her. But what was to be done?

Every time she uttered a groan, it nearly brought tears to Pierce's eyes. He would have jumped head foremost off the highest rock to have saved her from a moment's pain. Doubtless Arthur would have done as much, only it did not occur to him that such a proceeding would have been of the slightest avail in the present difficulty. He, therefore, told Lady Eda, if she would make up her mind to it, he would carry her.

"No," she replied, "she would lie there for ever; she would not be carried."

The objection was intelligible to More's

mind, though not to Arthur's. The cousin was of course the only one to carry her. This he intimated by telling Arthur to bring her on, while he went to fetch the carriage. Directly he was gone, Lady Eda made less positive resistance; and yielding to her fate, was raised in the powerful arms of her cousin, who walked away with her as if he had been carrying a six-inch doll.

When they reached Mona, Lady Eda was immediately put to bed; and his lordship with the whole household were for the next three days in a state of uproar and excitement, such as the old castle rarely witnessed, except on occasions of mighty importance, like the present.

During the time Eda was kept a prisoner in her room, a general dullness pervaded the company down-stairs. Arthur and his friend daily went to the moors; but Pierce was, according to Arthur's account, anything but a keen shot. "He moved

about," said that young gentleman, "with his tail between his legs, for all the world like old Ponto when his hide is peppered for running in to a point."

CHAPTER II.

THE greatest consolation Pierce found, in the absence of the mistress of his heart, was in the society of Mr. Gregory. The benevolent intelligence of this old gentleman, the cheerfulness of his manner, which Pierce more than once suspected concealed some secret cause of melancholy, and his genuine sympathy, backed by experience and research, rendered him, in spite of the discrepancy of their ages, a valuable friend and an excellent counsellor. Without inquisitiveness, Mr. Gregory's manner inspired confidence. He listened with interest to the past history

of his young friend's life. Pierce confided to him the unsettled state of his mind upon subjects of religion, which, as we have before seen, had so perplexed him. He was surprised at the forbearance of the old man who so patiently heard his objections before attempting to refute them.

The fact was, Mr. Gregory perceived how the errors of More's scepticism originated partly from contact with minds whose conclusions had been based on false assumptions, and partly from an organization whose tendency was to rely too implicitly on the infallibility of its own reasoning powers. In order to contend successfully with such a case, Mr. Gregory knew the surest remedy was to be found in grappling with the cause of the evil itself. The errings of mere speculative reason were alone to be redirected by a truer induction and better reason.

As to metaphysical speculations, Mr. Gregory laboured to convince him, that "since

no depth of inquiry could ever reveal the smallest ray of light upon mysteries, placed by God beyond the range of the most exalted human intelligence—so the knowledge or ignorance of such mysteries in nowise affected the unalterable truths of religion, or the principles of moral rectitude. When finite powers attempted to fathom the designs of an infinite Being, they were necessarily doomed to disappointment. Yet, since the limits of the reasoning faculties were undefined, man would ever speculate on the nature of that scheme, in which his destiny was involved. Questions apparently unanswerable forced themselves upon him; and such questions as not only mystify, but suggest doubts of the most painful character.

“The foremost of these, and which constituted the corner-stone, and stumbling-block of sceptical philosophy, had ever been—firstly, the existence of sin, and secondly, the punish-

ment of that sin. Man's happiness being the consideration of his deepest concern, had naturally led him to reflect on what affected him in this respect here, and had operated on his belief of what was to become of him hereafter."

Perhaps the most striking form of the sceptical argument concerning the existence of evil had been put thus: that God either *could not prevent evil*, and therefore was *not all-powerful*; or that He *could* prevent it, and had not done so, in which case He was *not infinitely good*.

To this Mr. Gregory replied: "the mind rejected the idea of such a conclusion from the following premises. In contemplating the works of the Deity—the creation of the universe—we infer, primarily, that such a power is without limit; secondly, that the wisdom and intelligence, which direct it, must also be infinite.

"Now, from such conditions, infinite good-

ness follows as a necessary result. For, admitting (as *we must*) evil to be the consequence of error or weakness—admitting the first part of the argument to be true—but admitting at the same time that the Being who created all things must be so intimately acquainted with their relations as to be incapable of error with respect to them, we must also admit that a Being *free from error and weakness*, is a Being *of infinite power and wisdom*; and *must* therefore possess *infinite goodness as a consequent attribute*.

“If this argument failed to convince; the objection might be answered in other ways. By simply considering the operation of evil itself, he might learn how erroneous it was to question the wisdom of God’s decrees, because we were unable to comprehend them.

“Let it be supposed that His own glory might be the object of God’s works. The supposition was a natural one—because a

being self-existent cannot glorify itself except by his works. Now the greatest conceivable glory would be that *voluntarily* rendered to a Supreme Being by a being most nearly approximating his own nature. On earth, that being was Man; and, although the material creation was a manifestation of God's power, it offered an inferior tribute to His glory, as compared to man; because its tribute was involuntary, since all matter acted in obedience to fixed and irresistible laws.

“Here we might perceive the design of *free agency*. God might have created man free from sin, and in all his acts necessarily to have glorified his Creator; but was not God's glory greater in having created a being who, though beset with every temptation to sin, was so influenced and affected by the contemplation and love of his Maker, as to resist that temptation, and of his free will to pay the highest tribute he was capable of paying, in spite

of all the attractions to sin which beset him?

“There was no respect wherein man bore a greater resemblance to his Maker than in his condition as a free agent. With this power, conjoined to that whereby he discriminated good from evil, he might act either sinfully or virtuously.

“Now consider the signification of the terms Good and Evil. They were used to define opposite qualities; hence the non-existence of one of these qualities would, in a measure, alter the conditions of the other. Without evil, the goodness of a human being would no longer constitute that idea we now attach to the word virtue.

“The derivation of ‘Virtue’ was from a word implying strength; its literal meaning was, the result of that effort by which something contradicting man’s notion of good is overcome. *Virtue, then, is essentially the attribute of a being exposed to evil; and the*

exercise of it depended on the condition of free agency.

“ In order, therefore, to enjoy this resemblance to our Maker, and for the still greater purpose of God’s glory in the voluntary nature of our obedience, more than one direction of action was necessary; this was afforded in the existence of Evil as well as Good. Now, although permitted, evil came not of God, that were impossible; but just as perfect goodness came of the free agency of perfect power, so imperfection—or evil—came of the free agency of weakness, which is imperfect power. Why imperfect, is again to question the wisdom of the Allwise.

“ Finally, by observing the wonderful love of our Heavenly Father, in converting this evil of our own invention to our own eternal advantage, and hence to His glory, we ceased to repine at our condition, we recognized His infinite goodness, and at last were taught by the gift of His grace, to kiss

the hand that chastened us in that school wherein He had designed to try us, and vouchsafed to bid us work out our own salvation."

Thus Mr. Gregory attempted to show how the existence of evil, as an argument against the goodness of God, was refutable. With regard to the second point of sceptical objection—namely, the eternal punishment of mankind, he found it more difficult to answer. Because any attempt at explanation must be conjectural, and his own convictions, though formed after mature examination, might still be erroneous, and would certainly by many, be thought irreconcilable with the existing translation and ordinary language of Scripture.

He heartily beseeched God for pardon if he had deceived himself, and as earnestly prayed that, if in error, his opinion might not mislead others. Still, what he believed to be Truth he did not shrink from avowing.

"With regard to a future state, he considered the doctrine of unlimited punishment

depended for credence, not so much on the expressions ascribed to our Lord, and the language of Scripture, as upon the literal meaning of those expressions, and the true signification of the words 'eternal' and 'everlasting.' He pointed out passages, both in the Old and New Testament, where these same terms were employed in a sense signifying unmistakeably a limited duration of time.* The many expressions in Scripture favouring the idea of a limited punishment; the constant use of hyperbole; the figurative character of the Hebrew language, affording a possibility that the awful sentence passed by Christ upon sinners may not generally be understood by us, in the sense He intended; and the consideration of the benign attributes of the Supreme Being—all, as he believed,

* For such passages, and for the more complete exposition of this part of the argument, the author refers the reader to Southwood Smith's admirable treatise upon the Divine Government.

united to support the doctrine, that the terms 'eternal' and 'everlasting' did not necessarily signify unlimited punishment.

"In the first place," continued Mr. Gregory "Christ teaches us to call upon God as our *Father*. Now, what is the nature and object of punishment in a father? It must be correction with a view to ameliorate. The infliction of suffering for past guilt, without reference to the prevention of future misery as induced by the commission of evil, is not punishment, but revenge.

"Such, for instance, is the punishment of death by man. It has no ultimate object beyond that of precluding the repetition of crime: which object might be secured by secondary means.

"The infliction of positive pain without the ulterior object of producing good to the sufferer, must be positive evil to the sufferer. But hell, which is represented as a state of *everlasting* misery, could not effect that purpose: therefore hell, or *endless* pain, is

positive evil: and if positive evil, could neither, as he had before said, be designed by a Being perfectly good, nor permitted by a Being infinitely powerful. The ultimate and everlasting misery of any one single created being, could not, according to such belief, possibly be the scheme of a merciful God."

Mr. Gregory admitted that in an unadvanced state of the general mind, the inculcation of such a doctrine might operate perniciously in removing the only restraint to vice. But was it not a degrading idea, contrary to the context of Scripture, and at variance with "the first and great commandment" given by our blessed Lord, that man's chief incentive should be fear, not *love*? Was it not, moreover—if on such a point we might speculate—a species of irreverence to entertain such conceptions of the Deity, as regarded Him more in the light of an avenging tyrant than of a loving Father?

He believed that the capacity for truth

in man was intended to be progressive ; that just as virtue and wisdom in an individual augmented in proportion to his capacity for receiving them, so, with the multitude, truth obtained in proportion to the progress of the word's ethical condition ; that Providence worked by *exoteric* principles ; that idolatry and heathenism had been permitted as the designed means of progression in one age ; that prophecy and miraculous agency had prepared the soil for, and had nourished the seeds of Christianity ; that from out of the conflicts of Schism had issued the triumphs of Truth ; that the human mind was for ever advancing ; that each succeeding age sloughed off some prejudice, and put on some wisdom ; that the peculiarities of creed, and the difference of sects, were gradually becoming rather outward than real distinctions ; that the opinions of thinking men tended substantially to a similarity of conviction ; and that Reason, having become once and for ever established as not

controverting, but as confirming Christian faith, the Bible, according to Mr. Gregory, was to be referred to as the all-sufficient canon by which to regulate religious opinion and moral conduct.

CHAPTER III.

FROM such dissertations, addressed to him by his instructor from time to time, Pierce More derived much advantage. Subjects he had before shrunk from examining into, now became the most engrossing themes for his inquiry. Often during Lady Eda's indisposition he joined Mr. Gregory out walking, and listened with profound interest to the conversations of that benevolent old man.

He was not, however, always a listener. Finding the advantage of Mr. Gregory's

advice on one subject, he availed himself of it upon many others. He spoke frankly of his monetary difficulties, though he made no disclosure of the method adopted to escape them. Hence the name of Winter never passed his lips; for he feared Mr. Gregory might think, what he himself was half inclined to suspect, that Winter's motives were not purely disinterested; and if so, that he should be the victim of them.

His intentions with respect to Lady Eda had long been observed; so that his confidence here was anticipated. Mr. Gregory cautioned him good-humouredly to beware. Lady Eda, he must remember, was very young and inexperienced, and might possibly be totally unconscious of the conquest she had made. His own impetuosity would be apt to mislead; the very simplicity of her character might deceive him. True enough, she liked him; but he should always recollect that liking was not loving. Probably this was

the first time any attention of the kind had been paid to her ; she would naturally be dazzled by it, and might find a difficulty in acting under such circumstances. The integrity of her nature would prevent her from feigning indifference ; and yet her slight acquaintance with the usages of the world might induce him to mistake the warmth of her manner for more than it meant—for more, in fact, than friendship.

Pierce would not hear of the possibility of such things. He was louder than ever in setting forth her remarkable qualities, and insisted that her behaviour was a positive proof of her interest.

Mr. Gregory admitted that Pierce ought to know best ; but if he would take the advice of an old man, he would wait at all events for another six months ; at the end of which time, if things prospered, he might renew his suit with propriety.

More's agitation increased as the term of

his visit drew towards a close. Lady Eda was rapidly recovering from the effects of her sprain ; she could not yet walk about out of doors ; but with the help of a stick was almost as active as ever within. For a certain portion of the day Lord Longvale insisted on her keeping quiet, and obliged her, much against her will, to lie upon the sofa ; where she declared she was fidgeted to death, because she could neither play, nor work, nor sleep.

On these occasions Pierce had many opportunities for quiet chats ; the dangerous effects of which he was fully sensible of, but never had sufficient strength of mind to avoid. Sir Andrew had by this time sneaked off ; and Arthur Longvale even had retired from a field, where there was room but for one conqueror. Often, More would relate the stirring incidents of his travels, colouring the scenes with the graphic touches of an artist. Often, he would amuse his

attentive listener with vivid sketches of character. Sometimes he took delight in guiding, as he fancied, her taste in literature ; in forming her opinions on society ; in provoking her to argument on subjects where his superior information enabled him to amuse himself with the *naïveté* of her replies. Then it was she would pretend to be angry at his impertinence ; refuse to answer him until he apologized, or showed, by his manner, that he was sorry for the offence. She was too amiable to punish him long for his rudeness ; and when she relented, there was something so inexpressibly sweet in her way of showing it, that he, like many a selfish man has done before him, often provoked her, for the pleasure of watching the smile which followed the pout and the frown.

Once when he had really annoyed her, and despaired of recovering her good-will, she forgave him ; but he still continued to show his sorrow ; and as he sat next her in

the evening, unnoticed by the others, she asked him if he had a head-ache, and said :

“ Smell this sprig of verbena, it will do you good.”

But the sprig of verbena was in the girdle, where the sprig of verbena had been once before, and he did not know how to smell it ; and only smiled.

“ Pinch the leaves,” she said, “ why don’t you pinch the leaves ?”

He did as she told him, and said :

“ I watched the other unhappy sprig that once before I pinched, and I saw it die. These poor leaves will perish, too, now that I have pressed them. Will you not be sorry for their inevitable fate ?”

“ Oh, the sprig won’t die ; see with what unbending dignity it holds its head ; besides,” she replied, “ it will die in a good cause if it cures your head-ache.”

He ventured to press the leaves ; and, emboldened by the act, took in his hand the

little crucifix she frequently wore suspended by a rosary round her neck.

"Tell me," he said, "why do you wear this and never any other ornament?"

"Because I like it," she replied.

"I admire your taste," he returned, "for I detest all gewgaws. But is there not some history attached to this cross? I have heard you call it the family crucifix. You are not a Roman Catholic, are you?"

"Why do you ask?" said she, "should you be very much horrified if I were?"

"I horrified? No, I have a good many sins to answer for, but I sincerely hope bigotry and intolerance are not amongst them. I have lived so much abroad, you know, that I have ceased to observe the difference between a pious Catholic and a pious Protestant—a difference, I believe, that exists more in outward observances than substantial faith."

"I cannot," said Lady Eda, "go quite so

far as you in thinking there is no greater distinction between these two forms of Christianity than that of mere forms ; still I agree that charity of opinion is one of the noblest virtues ; and intolerance, on the contrary, one of the most narrow-minded follies. However, the story connected with this cross may interest you. It is rather long, but I will, if you like, tell it.

“ You must first observe that though very small the workmanship of the crucifix, and especially of the beads, is not of the most finished order. The wood, as you see, is walnut ; age has turned it this dark colour. Well, this little crucifix and rosary belonged once to Lady Maud Longvale, a daughter of a cruel old ancestor of mine who lived in the time of the Great Rebellion. Lord Longvale was of course a royalist and a Roman Catholic. Not far from this place, at the Manor House, you have already visited, lived, as I think I told you, a Sir Everard

Boulton, whose bigotry against Catholics was as bitter as his neighbour's hatred to a Protestant. Between Sir Everard and my ancestor, existed a rancorous hostility. There was no intercourse between the two houses: and when by accident their heads met, the haughty pride of the knight was responded to by the arrogant contempt of the peer.

“Sir Everard had two sons. John was the name of the elder; his tastes were those of a scholar. His younger brother was devoted to hawking, and hunting, and all such pastimes as were more congenial to the habits of the old knight. For this reason the younger child was the favourite; the eldest was taken little notice of, and was permitted to pursue his own devices without the interference of his family.

“It so happened that John in the course of his walks fell in with Lord Longvale's chaplain, Father Lungen. The learning and benevolence of the good priest won the affec-

tion of the scholar, and unknown to all but themselves, they became respectively pupil and teacher. Many were the animated discussions held between them, sustained with almost equal ingenuity on both sides, concerning the difference of their creeds; and, though neither ever confessed conviction from the other's argument, each admitted and felt that the differences in their opinions were more of letter than of spirit. These discussions by no means tended to break off their agreeable intercourse. Father Lungen, while he took delight in the freshness of his pupil's mind, secretly entertained hopes of making a convert of him in the end. John sought the society of the Padre for the sake of that experience, and superior knowledge, which so much assisted him in his eager search after truth.

“In summer they roamed the woods and fields together; or, when his pastoral duties summoned him to some act of his ministry, the good Padre would invite his young friend

to accompany him : thus alternately instructing the mind of his pupil from the vast book of nature, and engendering in his heart the benevolence and charity which his own conduct exemplified among the sick and needy. In winter, young Boulton spent many an evening in the turret-chamber of Mona Castle, where Father Lungen and he pored together for hours over the learned volumes long since returned to these shelves. Secretly he came, secretly he went away ; for had Lord Longvale found a Protestant, and the son of Sir Everard Boulton, cosily seated over a blazing fire in his house, he would, if he could, have pitched him from the window, or perhaps have sent him to the dungeon below the oratory. But John cared little for the danger of his enterprise ; and in course of time had a much stronger inducement to risk his life in coming stealthily to Mona, than either the love of his books or the society of Father Lungen.

“It was one wild night in winter, when John Boulton left the Manor House. Before he had half-crossed the bleak moorlands between his father’s house and the castle, he was overtaken by a heavy snow-storm, and lost his way. The snow changed to sleet, and although the change enabled him again to discover his path, he was drenched to the skin by the time he reached the castle. At the foot of the turret—I dare say you have observed it—is a small stone arch, now closed up with rubbish, and overgrown with ivy. By means of this little doorway, John gained admittance into the castle, and ascending the corkscrew staircase, entered the chamber of the priest.

“Perhaps it was owing to the lateness of his visit, that he found on this occasion, his usual place occupied by a strange tenant. Father Lungen’s new pupil—if pupil she might be called—was a girl of about eighteen. When John entered the room, she rose with

an exclamation of surprise ; but, as he still remained in the doorway, she appeared unwilling to pass him, and retreated a step, so as to place her hand on the protecting arm of her instructor.

“ ‘ Come in, and close the door, my son,’ said the priest ; ‘ the night is so foul, I did not expect thee ; and, as thou seest, have admitted a visitor, who has often asked permission to see her old confessor in this retired part of her father’s mansion, allotted to his retreat. Come in, I say, and bar out that whistling night-air. Ave Maria sanctissima ! what is the lad staring at ?’

“ But John still stood with his hand on the door, entranced by the loveliest face it had ever been his good fortune to behold.

“ ‘ You are sadly wet, Sir,’ said the girl, recovering from her first alarm. ‘ Will you not draw nearer to the hearth ? The log burns briskly, and I will presently fetch you that from the kitchen shall cheer you, if you

be in the mind to partake of my father's hospitality.'

" 'Nay, nay,' said the priest, 'he will not send thee drudging to the kitchen, lady, I warrant him. Stay where thou art, and let him dry his garments; while you, my daughter, translate for both our ears the remnant of this chapter.'

"Lady Maud did as he bade her; and having ended her task, curtsied to the stranger, and left them.

"Such was the commencement of an acquaintance soon destined to affect the fate of both of these young people. Sometimes they met by accident, sometimes by agreement. Father Lungen encouraged the intimacy, for he felt a paternal care in their present welfare, and a spiritual interest in the culture of their minds. Many a long evening was passed by the three together in the priest's turret. Lady Maud listened in silence to the discussions of the two companions; and, though

her faith and convictions sided with her preceptor, Father Lungen saw that her heart was enlisted in the cause of his opponent.

“It is not known how long the courtship lasted. The lovers were betrothed; and, as they supposed, Father Lungen alone, was the depository of their secret. Notwithstanding their betrothal, the enmity of the parents left no hopes of a union. The mere suspicion of the intimacy would have caused either Lord Longvale, or the knight, to take steps at once to stop it. As to a clandestine marriage, the chaplain of the castle had already overstepped his duty in permitting his young friends to meet; he would not listen for a moment to the hopes of John, especially as his conscientious scruples were strengthened by the assurance of their future destitution if they acted in defiance of parental authority.

“At length, owing to the severe illness of Sir Everard Boulton, the visits of his son

were more often interrupted. Sir Everard died: and John's visits ceased entirely. Both Lady Maud and her confessor were at a loss to account for the prolonged absence of her affianced husband. The Padre sought tidings of him in his own neighbourhood, but could hear none. Some said he had shut himself up with grief: others reported that he had left the country, and was gone abroad. Not a word or a message came to the castle to account for his neglect. At last, a rumour was set about, the truth of which was confirmed by the inquiries of the priest, that, whether from suspicion of his son's attachment, or from his hatred of Catholics, Sir Everard had left the property to his son John conditionally; and in the event of his marrying a Catholic, every shilling was to revert to the younger brother.

“The fatal suspicion flashed upon the mind of Lady Maud that her lover had forsaken her for his estate. The assurances to the

contrary of the good Father Lungen were of no avail; she refused to receive comfort. Day by day, she pined away, heart-broken at the remorseless conduct of her betrothed. There were moments when the memory of his vows, the thousand little evidences of his love, returned with all the freshness of reality; then she thought of him only as the devoted, the noble, and the true. She reproached herself for the baseness of her doubts, and suffered herself to indulge in the delicious dream of his return; but soon the undeniable grounds of suspicion forced themselves upon her, and again her heart shrunk with despair, and every hope withered as it sprung.

“Months wore away, and her health rapidly declined. Already the hectic flush of consumption tinged her pale and hollow cheeks. It was evident that even John’s return could not save her now.

“In this state of health she hardly ever left her own apartment. When she did so, it was

to saunter feebly beneath the shadow of the beech avenue, or along the plateaus of the terrace; her only companion being a large hound, gentle to her, but savage with all others except John, to whom the dog had ever shown great affection.

“ One evening in autumn she was walking thus with her hound, when presently he came gravely up to her, wagging his tail, and carrying something in his mouth, which he dropped at her feet. It was a small square wooden box. Upon one side was carved her own name, upon the other the word ‘Faith.’ Within the box was this crucifix and rosary.

“ There was something so inexplicable in the mode of receiving it; something so strange in its being addressed to her; something so ambiguous in the word ‘Faith,’ that the mystery revived a sort of painful hope, which she could neither account for, nor dispossess herself of.

“ After pondering several hours over her

strange gift, she took the box and its contents and placed them for explanation in the hands of Father Lungen. His surprise was equal to her own; and, as with her, the mysterious nature of the discovery induced him to believe it might lead to further disclosures. Lady Maud caught his meaning from the brightened look of his countenance.

“ ‘I know it is so, Father,’ she exclaimed, clasping her hands with eagerness. ‘It is from him! And this cross tells me he has changed his faith for ours. All may yet be well.’

“The priest’s smile yielded to an expression of disappointment.

“ ‘Not so, my child,’ said he, ‘I know John Boulton too well. This cross is, I believe, a token from him to you; but ‘Faith’ has more meanings than one! Trust not in his change of creed. From the first I have told you he will not alter that, nor desert you.’

“ ‘Amen,’ said the girl.

“ ‘ Amen,’ said the priest, ‘ to the last determination. God have mercy on his soul for the other ! Leave the box with me, and go rest.’

“ Father Lungen puzzled and racked his brain to trace some clue to the meaning of the box. Alas ! that the finder had been a dumb animal. It was impossible to learn from what quarter it came. He examined it again and again, and was beginning to despond, when a possible key to the truth presented itself to his ingenious mind.

“ While closely inspecting the workmanship of the box it struck him that the walnut wood from which it had been carved, was similar in colour to much of the furniture in the castle. It had been a whim of some former owner of the castle, to use walnut for that purpose instead of oak. From this inkling, his thoughts darted to the idea of John’s confinement ; then he remembered once to have observed that the tressel in the dungeon

was, like the rest of the furniture, also made of this same wood.

“ Possessed of this notion, he hastened to test his conjecture by experiment. The window of the dungeon opens as you know upon the east front, almost under the large window of the oratory. It is only a few feet from the ground on the outside of the house, but owing to the thickness of the wall, and the angle of the aperture, the prisoner sees nothing but the light, and looking inwards all is obscurity.

“ Father Lungen’s impression now was that the little box, and crucifix, had been cut from the dungeon tressel, and then thrown by the prisoner through the aperture. The address on the box, and the nature of its contents, would not create suspicion. If they reached Lady Maud, the ambiguity of the motto, and her own interest in his fate, might reveal alike the constancy, and the situation of her father’s prisoner.

“ Thus thinking, he chose a fitting moment, and, thrusting his head as far as he could into the dungeon window, called on the name of Boulton. Instantly he was answered ; and from the dark cell into which his sight could not penetrate, a voice replied whose tones the good Padre at once recognised as those of his long lost friend.

“ The priest soon communicated his discovery to Lady Maud. Her joy at first knew no bounds ; but it was soon destined to receive a check in the difficulty of effecting his release, or even of holding the smallest intercourse with her lover. They learnt that Lord Longvale himself was the only person who ever entered the dungeon. Therefore every chance of bribing the gaoler was at once destroyed. Endless were the schemes devised by Lady Maud to elude the vigilance of her father. They only served, as she too late discovered, to rouse his suspicion, and enable him to frustrate her design

“After many fruitless endeavours to effect their purpose, it was agreed that Father Lungen should at a certain hour obtain possession of the dungeon key; and, having done so, meet Lady Maud in the oratory, whence they were to proceed to the cell together.

“At the appointed time Maud repaired to the chapel. All was dark; the whole castle was wrapt in sleep and silence. Alone in such a spot, at such an hour, the superstitious notions prevailing in those days might have terrified a stronger mind than hers; but, feeble and dying as she was, the thoughts of once more seeing and speaking with her lover, gave her an almost preternatural courage.

“She had not waited many moments when the priest entered, holding the key in one hand and a small horn lantern in the other. Touching a spring which opened a door in the paneling, the two descended the

stone staircase, and paused at the foot of the steps to unlock the iron-bound gate of the cell. The rusty bolts flew back, the heavy door grated on its hinges, and as the light fell on the worn frame of the prisoner, Lady Maud recognized her betrothed, and sank lifeless to the ground ere he could rush forward to support her. John raised her in his arms, and soon her senses were restored. Holy was the love of both as he clasped her delicate form to his breast. No difference of creed marred the perfect concord of their hearts. The spirit of their prayer was one. One pang of joy, and love, and praise rose to Heaven in deepest thankfulness for the fullness of that moment; and, though unspoken, the words of Ruth were the thoughts of both: 'Thy God shall be my God. Whither thou goest I will go!'

"When their arms were untwined, and their eyes turned from each other, to ask the blessing of the pious priest, lo! his cowl was

thrown back, and, instead of the benevolent features of Father Lungen, a glare of hatred met them from the grim features of Lord Longvale.

“ ‘Love to the last !’ he cried. ‘Henceforth ye shall live and die together !’

“ With these words he turned to close the door of the cell, when the priest himself confronted him.

“ ‘Hold, cruel man !’ said he. ‘The union you would thwart is sanctified by Heaven. On penalty of the Holy Church’s wrath, I charge you to desist from your inhuman purpose. Go ! my children ; none shall hinder you.’

“ His intervention was too late. The shock of horror and surprise, occasioned by her father’s presence, had snapped the feeble thread of life. Lady Maud pressed to her lips this little crucifix, which had been the means of restoring her to her lover ; and—when Boulton took it from her hands—she was *dead*.

“Upon his own death, not long after, he gave the cross and beads to Father Lungen and by him they were bequeathed, with a written account of the facts I have told you, to some member of our family ; who preserved them and has handed them down to posterity as a memorial of the things that were.”

Pierce thanked Lady Eda for the recital of a story, the more interesting to him because of the pleasure he took in listening to the voice of the teller.

CHAPTER IV.

EACH hour that increased their intimacy added to his anxiety. He could not make up his mind, whether to stay longer at Mona, or to leave it at once. If he stayed on, his fate was decided: if he went away—but he could not bear to think of this. At one moment his passionate love saw no obstacle which he was not determined to overcome; the next, his poverty was an irremediable hindrance. At one moment he was convinced she loved him, and, *mirabile*

dictu—but such is human nature—his own passion cooled at the thought; the next, she had hinted at the shortness of their acquaintance, or had made some remark which left him equally certain she never dreamt of him but as a friend.

In this perplexing state of mind, he received a letter from London, which saved him the trouble of coming to a determination for himself. It was from the wretched woman who wrote to him the day before his departure from town. It ran thus :

“ Sir,

“ This is not the first time I have appealed to you. I wrote to you rather more than a week since. You cannot have received that letter, or I feel sure you would not have denied me at least one boon. I asked that you would come and see me on my death-bed. Once again, and for the last time, I ask to see you before I die. For me the

struggle will soon pass. But my child— O God! the thought is worse than death— far worse than death—what will become of my child? Before my illness, while yet I possessed some remains of those fatal attractions which brought this ruin on me and mine, I was allowed some small pittance; enough, at least, to keep me from starving. When poverty and disease robbed me of my beauty, that man—for whose accursed love I broke the heart of a fond father—I drove to madness, and death, a devoted husband—I brought dishonour, misery, and perhaps starvation on my babe—my orphan—and for whom I have suffered years of agony, and remorse—abandoned me, left me to die penniless and alone. I do not weep, I do not suffer for myself, but for my child. O, help *him*! There is no one but you to help him. Come, with all haste come to see me! My father, my child's nearest relation, may yet be alive. He was a kind old man.

He will forgive the child. The child was not born in shame. He will surely love it, for he loved me once. Come to me. I will tell you his name—a name I dare not write—a name I never uttered since I first disgraced it. Let me hear a promise from your own lips that you will find him, that you will make him take my child, and I shall die better prepared to meet the face of one whom I shall soon confront in another world.”

As More read the letter, he could hardly believe Winter was the heartless villain he must be, if this statement proved true. He at once made up his mind to leave Mona the next day ; and determined to see the woman at the place whence she had directed her letter.

All the generous emotions of his heart were wound to the highest pitch by the description the outcast had given of her wretched state. He was resolved to help

mother or child in some way ; and if Winter turned out the real cause of their misery, he was fully resolved to call him to account, and henceforth to eschew the acquaintance entirely.

Such was the state of his feelings on the day before he was to leave Mona. He had passed a sleepless night, and had risen to go out long before anybody in the house was astir. He came in late to breakfast, and, as usual, found his seat next to Lady Eda unoccupied. They shook hands.

“What makes you so late ?” she asked.

“I have been out walking,” he replied. “I could not sleep, and have been up these four hours.”

“How odd !” said Lady Eda ; “exactly the same thing happened to me ; and now I am fatigued, and have got a head-ache.”

“I feel sad, too, somehow, at the thoughts of going away to-morrow.”

“Must you go ?” she inquired.

“Yes, it is a ‘must.’ But I hope to have the pleasure of paying Mona another visit some future day.”

More waited for an answer. Lady Eda lowered her voice, and with a slight accent of pathos in her tone, repeated one of the well-known stanzas from the “Psalm of Life :”

“Trust no future, howe’er pleasant,
Let the dead past bury its dead.
Act, act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o’erhead !”

Pierce made no reply. When breakfast was over, he went out, and pondered for hours on the dubious meaning of the quoted stanza. He repeated the lines a hundred times, and gave a thousand constructions to every word. “Trust no future, howe’er pleasant?” There could be but one interpretation to that. “Let the dead past bury its dead.” Forget everything ! There was no

room for hope. If the stanza had stopped here, it would have told all, and he might have listened to the warning. But the second part, the last part, the conclusion :—
“*Act ! Act !* in the living *present*,—Heart within and God o’erhead !” *Act ! act !* and *trust*. This was as evident as the other ; and all day long he muttered to himself his last deduction, “ *Act !* and *trust ! Act !* and *trust !*” As the day wore on, he began to tremble lest he should have no opportunity to speak what now he must and would speak, if chance gave him the opportunity. He sat for an hour by himself in the long drawing-room, and his heart beat at every step that came near the door. Whenever any one looked in, he was disappointed, but still rather relieved that it was not Eda. At last he heard by accident that she had gone to the village to see a poor sick woman. There was a possibility he might meet her as she returned, so he left the house, and

took the path by the shrubbery. The path was one of a number of rides cut through a wood of handsome ilexes. The rays of the setting sun scarcely penetrated the thick masses of foliage ; but patches of the gorgeous sky peeped through the open vistas ; throwing, by contrast, the dark canopy into deeper shade. The evening was warm almost to sultriness. Hardly a breath stirred the leaves ; and so still was all around him that, as the wood-pigeons every now and then broke with noisy flappings from out the trees, More started at the sudden interruption to his absent thoughts.

Here and there, under the largest of the ilexes, stood a rough bench or an old stump which served for a seat. Pierce was thinking to rest on one of these, as the best chance of seeing Lady Eda on her return home. He approached the nearest, but paused when within a few yards of it to listen to the sound of a voice proceeding from the very

place he was about to enter. Cautiously advancing, he observed Lady Eda seated at the foot of the tree speaking to her dog while she caressed it. He instantly withdrew to a spot where he remained concealed by the thicket behind her! How beautiful she looked—the favourite deerhound crouching proudly at her feet. Her head was uncovered, and her long brown hair, in romping with the hound, had become unloosed, and hung in luxuriant flakes about her neck. Her usually pale cheeks were slightly tinged by exercise with the freshness of health. Pierce had never seen her so animated, so enchanting.

“Come, Fridolin,” she said. “Come, Sir, put my hat on directly!” and she stooped her head towards the dog’s mouth, and then tossed it back to get rid of her streaming hair. “Oh! you silly fellow,” she said, laughing, as the hound jumped up, trying to

lick her face. "No, no, Sir ! not till you put my hat on. Down, Sir, down !" and the dog ceased jumping, and looked abashed at the commanding tone of his mistress. "Poor fellow !" she said, seizing him, and clasping his neck in her delicate hands. "Is he unhappy, then, because I won't give him a kiss ? There !" and she rested her face for a moment on the dog's forehead. "Heigho ! I wonder whether you are happy, Fridolin ! Tell me, Sir—are you happy ?" The dog wagged his tail. "And do you love me, Sir ?" Again the dog wagged his tail. "Yes, you love me ; and do I love you, Frid ?" The dog had got tired of wagging his tail, and lay down again at her feet. "Heigho ! nobody loves me."

More's pulse ran like fire through his veins, but he dared not move.

"Fridolin ! I'll sing you to sleep, you naughty, ungrateful dog."

Then she sung a verse or two of an old

Welsh ballad, and having done so rose and went homeward. The moment she had passed him, Pierce escaped stealthily from his hiding-place and, running round, got into one of the other rides so as to be at the entrance of the wood nearest to the house before her. He had time to regain his breath, and turned in the direction whither she was coming.

"Have you been to the village, Lady Eda?" he asked as they met.

"Yes," she replied; "are you going there? I advise you to take the green lane to the left, instead of going by the road, when you get out of the park."

"I am not going so far," he replied. "I merely came out for a stroll."

"Oh! It is a charming evening, isn't it?"

"Beautiful! But I had hardly noticed that it was so. I was thinking of something else."

"Come, then, a penny for your thoughts!"

"Perhaps they are not worth so much, Lady Eda."

"Then you must have been thinking of *far-things*, I suppose," and the girl laughed at her joke.

"Fie, Lady Eda! I thought you hated puns."

"I didn't mean it for a joke."

"Then you are quite wrong."

"What, for speaking seriously?"

"No, for supposing I could think of anything but present things and the present time."

"Do you call that thinking seriously?"

"The present is more to me than the future."

"You don't really mean that?"

"Yes; I was thinking of you."

"I'm extremely flattered. I hope the reflection was agreeable."

"The most of all to me."

Lady Eda quickened her pace towards the house.

“Do you know why so agreeable to me, Lady Eda?”

“No, indeed,” walking faster, “how should I?”

“It is,” said More, “because you are so unlike any one else in the known world that ever I met with.”

“Possibly. You know I have been brought up in a strange way. I sometimes fancy myself that I do what to other people must seem very odd. I dare say, now, I often say things which, considering the shortness of our acquaintance, you may think unaccountable; but you must remember the singular nature of my education, and make allowances accordingly.”

“Consider, in short, that on no account would you say to me anything which might not be proclaimed in the market-place. Are you so afraid of me? Can you not trust me

or admit me to the most ordinary privileges of friendship? Why will you for ever remind me of the shortness of our acquaintance? The shortness of our acquaintance!—is that a crime? You are always throwing it in my teeth, as if I could help it. It is my misfortune, not my fault, that I have not known you the last twelve years. I am sure, living as we do here, one may get to know as much of a person in a month, as one would in twenty London seasons at balls and parties.”

“ Well, we *are* very good friends ; at least I hope so.”

“ Oh, excellent, excellent *friends* certainly.”

“ You speak as if you intended to be sarcastic, but I don’t the least know what you mean.”

“ Oh yes, you do. You’re not so slow as you pretend. You know very well what I mean. But you are such a wonderful actress I would defy anybody to know what *you* mean.”

By this time the two had reached the

house. Lady Eda went up stairs: More to the drawing-room.

He was not a step farther than before. In fact, he seemed never more unlikely to declare his sentiments to the object of his love than at the present moment. Whenever he had the best opportunity, and was on the point of speaking, something in the manner of Lady Eda froze him out of it, and shut his mouth. He had several times made up his mind to speak out, and had even prepared himself with set speeches for the occasion. While thus engaged during an absence from her, his love would amount to desperation. He could at such moments have declared his devotion in the most impassioned terms. He accused himself of weakness, cowardice, and irresolution, for losing so many chances. Should he never have the courage to tell her how he loved her? How did other men behave? If he had not as much courage as others, he deserved not to win her. It was useless to

resolve and think of what to say; when it came to the point, he could not speak. But was it altogether his fault? Suppose Lady Eda did not love him? What—if he should be mistaken in her manner? Mr. Gregory had warned him, and Mr. Gregory was a shrewd old man.

Then he summed up all the pointed words he had at different times spoken to her; and with the accuracy of a lover's memory recalled her answers, the accent in which they were made, and the looks that accompanied them. The remembrance of some of these things in no measure removed his perplexity. Although, to be sure, if he did propose at once, it was hardly possible she could be unprepared, for he had frequently spoken in a way that left no room for mistake. These particular instances he fondly dwelt upon. The intense inspirations that had accompanied the moment of their utterance, made his heart throb to anticipate in thought the hour of possession,

when his whole soul would yield itself to the expression of a love that was maddening to think of now. Yet—with all he had felt at the time he was saying them—he might have felt a thousand times as strongly, and still might his words have been without meaning to Lady Eda.

A lover seldom, in addressing himself to his mistress, seeks to convey his sentiment through the medium of words. He finds them too feeble for his purpose. He scorns epithets, and dreads more than anything the possible suspicion of insincerity which hyperboles might give ground for. By a common instinct, looks, manner, the softened tones of voice, the pressure of the hand, are used as the *only* interpreters of the heart's tenderest emotions. To the lover these mean everything. To the being for whom that everything is meant, what do they signify? Often nothing; often they are misinterpreted; often they are unnoticed.

The words which Pierce had not been able to speak without trembling, because of the deep meaning they were intended to convey, might have been spoken to the most uninteresting young lady in any ball-room, by the most insipid coxcomb, who had learnt a few phrases of the sort from the last novel he had been reading, and who rehearsed them to every partner he danced with. Such conversations as the following, Pierce could remember word for word.

“If I dared to make a personal remark, Lady Eda,” said he one evening after dinner, “I should say that powder and patches would become you. They always set off small features to advantage.”

“Indeed,” said Lady Eda, pouting a little at the intimation that her features were small, as though small features had been a defect rather than a beauty.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Pierce, smiling at the pretty look of mild indignation ; “but

mind, I would not imply that your features are too small, or in any way compare them with any other features in the world. They remind me of no face I ever saw but one ; that is the face of a particular Madonna of Murillo's. It is at Madrid ; and of all faces I ever saw is the one I like best."

Lady Eda looked at Pierce to see if he was jesting ; but Pierce had put on a bold countenance, and was speaking seriously.

"Do you know, Mr. More," she said, "that I hate flattery?"

"Not more than I do, Lady Eda," he replied ; "and when you know me better, you will know it is a fault I am seldom guilty of."

"*Seldom* guilty of? Then you admit you do flatter sometimes?"

"Yes, sometimes I do. In fact, I was wrong in saying seldom. I always flatter when I find people vain enough to accept flattery for sincerity ; and as there are not a

few such people in the world, I believe I flatter very often."

"And how am I to know you don't flatter me?"

"Because, in the first place, you are not a vain person; and in the second, I never flatter people I like. So far from it, I am in the habit of saying things that are not always quite civil. But," he added, lowering his voice, and speaking earnestly, "you remember the lines in the '*Misanthrope* ?'

"Plus on aime quelqu'un, moins il faut qu'on le flatte.
A ne rien pardonner, le pur amour éclate !' "

Eda turned away her head, and bestowed one of her sweetest smiles upon Arthur, who came up to speak with her, just as Pierce had cited his couplet. He endeavoured to engage her in further conversation, but she studiously declined listening. Hurt at this abrupt interruption to a *tête-à-tête* so delightful to him, he left Lady

Eda, and commenced a serious flirtation with Miss Fitzbun. Now, although Miss Fitzbun had long since resigned any serious hopes of a conquest, she pertinaciously kept her forces hovering about the field, to annoy an enemy she was not powerful enough to cope with in open battle. On principle, Pierce despised the flirtation scheme, as part of a system of love-making too vulgar and common-place for his notice. Theoretically, he thought it absurd to win the affections of one person by trifling with those of another, and by hurting the feelings of both. Practically, he felt the irritating effect of a slight ; and, finding his own affections excited, sought by the same means to work the same result upon Lady Eda.

Miss Fitzbun, ever ready to favour an iniquitous design of this particular nature, made the most of all his compliments ; simpering and smirking at them whenever Lady Eda looked her way, as if Mr. More was putting the mo-

mentous question at every other sentence. Lady Eda did look at Pierce ; and Pierce could see, or thought he could, that she was much more occupied with him than with the remarks of Longvale. Tired of Miss Fitzbun, and of his own folly, he again turned to Lady Eda, fully hoping for an immediate reconciliation. Possibly Lady Eda might not have been aware that Pierce did hope for a reconciliation, for there was nothing in her manner the least to indicate a reciprocal hope.

“ You have been doing the useful, I see,” she said.

“ How the useful ?” said Pierce.

“ Making yourself agreeable to poor Miss Fitzbun. I am so glad you have been talking to her. I am afraid she gets very much bored ; nobody ever seems to take any notice of her, poor girl !”

“ Except when *you* condescend to favour her with that charmingly patronizing air you know how to assume so very naturally.”

“ I was not aware,” said Lady Eda, rather haughtily, “ that I patronized anybody.”

“ Oh yes, you do though, and more people than one.”

“ Pray have the goodness to tell me—who ?”

“ No, I can’t do so : I leave that to your own conscience.”

Lady Eda smiled provokingly.

“ My own conscience does not accuse me.”

“ I dare say not ; you are very obdurate,” and Pierce was dumb.

It was getting rather late, and Fitzbun, at the request of Longvale seated herself at the piano, and began singing a favourite song of More’s. Pierce, who had contrived to make himself very miserable by misinterpreting everything Lady Eda had done or said to him throughout the evening, determined to let her see now, how deeply she had wounded his feelings ; so, arranging his features into the grimest smile they were capable of assuming, and,

inclining his body from his very heels, in order to give the utmost stiffness to his bow, he said in his best sepulchral voice :

“ Good night, Lady Eda.”

“ What ! you are surely not going to bed yet, are you ?”

He was nearly putting on a tragic air, and asking why he should stop ; but he thought better of it, and simply replied that “ he was going.”

“ Oh ! *do* stop a little longer ; you had better wait till your favourite song is finished.”

“ I don’t want to hear it :” and again making use of the single hinge at his ankles, he looked bitter, and retired.

In reviewing this evening’s incidents, as he afterwards did several hundred times over, there was nothing he could think of either remarkably encouraging, or remarkably the reverse. His impression at the time had certainly not been favourable. But,

when he recollected the nervous twitching of Lady Eda's lips, as, with a forced smile, she said—"Do stop a little longer"—he could not help thinking this twitching bespoke symptoms of annoyance at his going away in a huff. There were other lights in which the "*Do stop*," and the nervous lips, might be looked at, but they were, as he hoped, so improbable, and so particularly disagreeable, that he rejected them entirely.

When they met next morning, almost the first thing she said to him was :

"What made you go off in that sudden way last night? You astonished Miss Fitzbun tremendously. She chose that song expressly for you, I suspect."

Pierce hoped imputing this curiosity to Miss Fitzbun was but a feint to conceal her own interest. He replied honestly :

"Because I inferred from your manner

that you were tired of my society ; and you must know I would sacrifice the pleasure of your presence—the greatest of all sacrifices to me—if by so doing I pleased you.”

Lady Eda remarked rather severely, that some people took offence on the smallest occasions. He asked if she referred to him. She replied, she did. At which answer he again felt and showed his annoyance ; adding that, where manner varied so much as hers, it was impossible to know upon what terms they stood. He then let fall a general observation on the shaking of hands, as an indication of feeling.

“Some there are,” said he, “who shake everybody by the hand as if all were equally liked. Such universal cordiality I hate as much as a perpetual smile : it means nothing. For myself I express more by the pressure of my hand than by anything I say.”

The next time they shook hands, he

fancied — it might have been only fancy —that she received his greeting, and returned it, with much more than ordinary emphasis.

CHAPTER V.

REVOLVING these matters in his mind, sometimes deriving hope from them, and sometimes trembling lest Lady Eda should, in the event of his proposing, remind him of the shortness of their acquaintance, Pierce, on coming in from the walk above described, repaired to the drawing-room; there to await in restless anxiety, the decisive answer he had no longer the prudence or the patience to postpone. He was alone; but she came not. Growing more and more restless,

he opened the piano, and sought to vent the disquiet of his mood in a plaintive melody, which every now and then he interrupted with the wildest discords. At last the door opened, and Lady Eda entered. He took no notice of her, but went on with his discords.

“What are you doing, Mr. More? Do please shut up the piano. I never heard such a noise.”

“I am sorry it offends you, but it happens to express the exact state of my mind at the present moment.”

“What an unenviable state it must be!” said Lady Eda, taking up a book to read.

“It is rather,” returned Pierce. “It is a struggle between love and friendship. I cannot make up my mind which of the two has most charms.”

“Friendship, to be sure. I don’t believe in romance. Love between relations is very beautiful, no doubt. I often wish I had a

sister. Brothers don't care for one so much, I think."

More played on, but did not turn. As he played, he murmured lowly to himself:

"Would I were your brother! Or that I could change my sex and be your bosom's friend—sharer of all your most secret thoughts, your heart's best counsellor—certain, then, your happiness would be my own; without fear or jealousy of losing the too passionate love which could not then exist between us! Now! now, my fears so outweigh my hopes that every sweet thought of you is coupled with a more bitter pang."

"What an extraordinary recitative! I could not hear a word of it," said Lady Eda. "What were you saying?"

"That friendship," he replied, "may be a nobler tie than love. Yet is it but one element of love. The ecstasies of love I

know must pass away, must yield to common-place affection, may even change to cold indifference ; but is it the less sweet because it is so transient ? Is the lightning less brilliant because it does not shine for ever ? We cease to wonder at the dazzling rays of sunlight, but the electric cloud that bursts in thunder awes us with amazement. One moment's bliss redeems long years of sorrow !”

“The price is a dear one,” said Lady Eda.

“Not so dear but that it is worth the paying for, Lady Eda.”

He left the piano, and stood before her. His face was deadly pale, but his voice was firm and his look determined.

“Well, Mr. More ?”

He walked about the room.

“It seems to me,” said Lady Eda, “that you are rather a fidget.”

“What makes you think so ? Because

I walk up and down the room ? I do that when I read by myself. It helps one to think."

"No ; but—"

" But independent of that, you think me a fidget. If you mean by fidget, that I never rest till I accomplish what I undertake—perhaps I am so. But I should say, Lady Eda, *you* are not otherwise than a fidget."

" I ? Good gracious ! I am not the least bit of a fidget. My father often scolds because I sit calmly at my book or work, while he is stamping about with excitement. I never show my excitement."

" You think so ? Sometimes I fancy your feelings betray themselves."

" No, I am always calm before others. It is not right, you know, to show excitement before other people. I may feel it when alone, but that is quite different."

There was a pause of some minutes. Pierce then sat down beside her.

“ May I sit here ? ” he asked.

“ No ; it is very ungentlemanly.

He started ; but saw she was joking.

“ Like you,” he said, after another pause, “ I never, if I can help, show what I feel before other people. Not a word escapes me when my whole soul is panting for utterance. The deeper my emotion the more it shrinks from the light—from encountering the blighting look of indifference. But not on this account are my feelings less strong—not on this account can *you* have failed to know me. You have not, cannot be deceived. If till now my manner has not spoken it, here I tell you all—all. Eda, dear Eda, I love you ! From the moment we first met, you were destined to rule my fate. My life, my being, hangs on your will ! ”

He let fall the hand he had grasped within his own. Her look of surprise and calm

dignity was more than a sufficient answer. She began to speak.

“Enough, enough,” he cried; “let not the fatal word pass your lips. I was mad! I—a year hence—an age—say not impossible for ever!”

“For ever impossible! I am sorry, truly sorry, Mr. More, that my manner has misled you. My age and inexperience must be my excuse. I beg of you to forgive me, and forget that you have ever seen me. Again I repeat, that the subject you have spoken to me upon must *never* be recurred to.”

She was about to go.

“Stop!” he said, placing himself between her and the door. “Hear me one instant, Lady Eda! Cancel the words ‘for *ever*.’ Leave me a hope, that at the end of years, if still your heart be free, I may strive to win it. For mercy’s sake grant me this. I ask no more.”

“Mr. More, you have my answer. It is final. I beg you to let me go.”

“Go, then! And learn that you have mocked and trifled with a heart whose devotion you could not fathom. Go! Seek a husband from the noble, the wealthy, and the graceful, — Never shall you meet with one whose love can equal mine! I leave you. Farewell! May you never suffer a moment of that long anguish which is in store for me—the agony of a heart that beats without hope! Yet will I endure it; and when you hear others call me happy, remember it is not happiness but endurance. And though now you think me the presumptuous fool of an hour—you will live to acknowledge the dignity of a constancy like mine!

He bowed, and she passed on and left him.

The instant Lady Eda was gone, he rushed up-stairs, entered his own room, locked the door, closed the shutters to keep

out the little light which still remained, but was yet enough to remind him of the presence of familiar objects ; and, throwing himself full length on the floor, lay there in a state of almost utter insensibility.”

The death-blow is seldom felt in the rage of battle. The unnatural state of excitement, which immediately succeeded to the first anguish of his disappointment, had borne him through the first trial to his self-control with a bravado of manner which might well have passed for the calmness of self-possession. He was no sooner alone than he was overcome by the sudden outburst of the passion so long pent up within him. He lay upon the floor motionless as if in death ; his breathing was hardly perceptible, except at intervals, when his chest heaved convulsively ; all the functions of life seemed suspended. Even the faculties of his mind were completely prostrate and subdued. For several hours he thus remained without

moving. By degrees he became aware of what had happened. He knew where he was, but so agonizing was the remembrance of the dreadful event which had taken place, that he closed his eyes and stopped his ears, as if to shut out every action of thought and memory.

With reviving consciousness, imagination began to work. The dread reality of his altered relation to Lady Eda—of his act which had brought it about, and of the lasting effect—the irremediable nature of that change—forced itself into his thoughts, notwithstanding the violent efforts he made to resist it. If for a few minutes forgetfulness or unconsciousness afforded that relief he vainly sought in sleep, it was attended with none of the soothing effects of repose. The revival of his faculties was the more painful from their temporary cessation. Then rushed upon him a crowd of passions and regrets, a confused mass of conflicting ideas, through

which a gleam of reason sometimes shone—only to make them the more terribly distinct. He seemed to be aware that he had passed at one step from the height of bliss to the depth of woe; that he had enjoyed for once and once only the greatest degree of happiness he was capable of; that no power on earth could ever restore that happiness; that it was irrevocably gone from him—and all that remained, as compared with it, could be nothing but misery.

Hitherto his hopes had beamed with ecstasy. As far as this world was concerned, every hope was now annihilated, blotted out with the extinction of this one. The bitterness of these thoughts was so excessive that it overwhelmed every other sentiment, and again he relapsed into the stupor of profound despair.

At one moment he was roused by the belief that his sufferings could not last—that death would put an end to them; then so

bitterly they oppressed him, that he rose to his knees and prayed earnestly for madness. He strove to weep, but not a tear would fall. Tender-hearted as he was, the severe shock he had sustained denied to nature the relief which might have mitigated a lesser evil. Alas ! for him, he had not learned where to lay his burden. Sorrow had yet to lead him to that One with whom alone is peace for all that seek Him.

When the morning broke upon this harassing night, the noise his servant made at the door reminded him that a severe struggle was necessary to conceal the wretched state of his mind by placing a rigid guard over his looks and actions. Painful indeed was the prospect of what he had to undergo. He almost sank beneath the contemplation of it. If he had dared, he would have lain where he was for another four-and-twenty hours, so vividly did he picture to himself the torment of encountering Lady Eda, of being near

her, of being compelled to talk to her, to look at her, and hear her speak ; and withal to reflect on what her presence, look, and voice had been to him once, and what they were to be to him henceforth.

The entrance of his servant brought to his recollection that he had intended to order a chaise the day before, and had forgotten to do so. This oversight was the more to be lamented because it would oblige him to stay the whole of that day and part of the next at Mona Castle. There was no place nearer than Conway whence a chaise could be procured, and Lord Longvale's horses had plenty to do without taking him so great a distance. His stay, therefore, was inevitable ; and he foresaw, at least during the hours of dinner and breakfast, that it would be impossible to avoid coming in contact with Lady Eda.

Broken in spirit, and unequal to the task of quelling his agitation, he had need of all his

firmness to carry him unflinching through the meeting in the breakfast-room. Lord Longvale was the first to inquire the cause of his absence from dinner. He replied he had been rather unwell, and that he found starving an infallible cure for a head-ache. Sir Andrew observed that he had probably eaten something which had disagreed with him. To which he answered, probably this might have been the cause of his illness, but it was hard to resist the good things to be met with at his lordship's table. Then he laughed; but it was a forced and nervous laugh, and he felt convinced that Lady Eda, at whom he dared not look, was observing him. Miss Fitzbun was certain he must be ill—he was so pale; and it was a very bad sign when people could not eat. She wished he would tell her what was the matter with him; she was an excellent homœopathic doctor, and delighted in giving advice. Sir Andrew then remarked that his hand shook;

and was inclined to think small doses would be of no avail in this particular case: he suggested change of air as a very excellent remedy sometimes. Arthur Longvale considered this to be an inhospitable insinuation; and declared that Pierce should not leave Mona till he was recovered.

Here More for the first time looked at Lady Eda. There was an expression of sadness in her face which he had never seen before. This look almost upset him. Had she appeared indifferent, it would have added strength to his purpose; but this look of sympathy—a sympathy never to be expressed, never to be extended—almost crushed him. The light breakfast he made a pretence of eating stuck in his throat; he felt as if he should faint; but he mustered up resolution, and even recovered himself so far as to ask her whether she had been out walking before breakfast. She replied she had, and made some further insignificant remark, the

meaning of which was completely lost upon him. But Miss Fitzbun took the opportunity of saying Lady Eda looked nearly as unwell as Mr. More ; and it was quite evident they must have eaten of the same dish, or else that they had been quarrelling. At this everybody laughed ; for the idea of More and Lady Eda quarrelling was so extremely improbable, that it at once struck them as ludicrous. Pierce joined in the merriment occasioned by the supposition, and added, that for all the quarrels he was ever likely to have with Lady Eda he should not be much the worse. Whereupon Sir Andrew good-naturedly advised him, with a facetious look of appeal to his audience, not to be too sure of that. Miss Fitzbun chimed in with a severe chuckle. Lord Longvale hummed a tune, and got up to look out of the window ; and Arthur seemed puzzled, as if impressed with the notion that the remark

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incapable of exertion. The sudden change in his manner and appearance was observed by all ; and some, perhaps, half-guessing at the cause, ceased to throw out insinuations, which the conventions of society would have held as a breach of good feeling and decorum.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the ladies retired, and he was again by himself, he could not support the idea of going to bed. Sleep was out of the question. If he did fall asleep, he should dream of her; and then to wake and feel the sickening void, would only aggravate his misery. Oh! the dead, heavy pain to be endured till sleep came again. Oh! the days after days still blank, still the same, with memory going ever where he went. No peace! no peace! Friends to see, to

talk, to laugh with, all the functions of life the same, but now how burthensome ! He felt hopeless, faithless, unpitied, alone, unloved for ever. He took pen and paper and thus addressed her :

“ I used hard words yesterday ; I accused you of having trifled with me. I recall them ; I would not leave you, perhaps for ever, with ill-feeling between us. Ill-feeling ? O Heaven ! as if ill-feeling could exist in *any* heart toward you, and that heart mine ! Mine, whose very principle of life is in its adoration of you ! Mine, which for one throb false to you, I would with these nails dig out, and torture ! O Eda ! Indeed, indeed, I love you ! But I will be calm. You told me ‘ to forget that I had ever seen you.’ What mean you ? that I am to destroy myself ! Were I *then* sure of forgetfulness—no, no ! ‘ Forget that I have seen you !’ My brain reels at the struggle :—

it is impossible—I cannot ‘forget I have seen you.’ I knew not until roused from my lethargy how deeply I had drained the poisonous cup of love. Never doubting that a manner all natural, all kind as your own, could be anything but a return of the *marked interest* I evinced towards you, I yielded like a child to the impulse of a too fond and enthusiastic disposition ; and at last was unexpectedly betrayed into an avowal, which must have appeared to you like the sudden outburst of a madman’s passion. It was not this—a growing admiration for a character I was then too base to comprehend, my own confiding and impetuous nature, the mis-interpretation of a thousand looks and words, in short a grievous, grievous error, and a most unlucky accident brought about a declaration, which, though it had been fifty times on my tongue, I had firmly resolved not to make until at least we had met again.

“And now that I have spoken and you have answered, ‘for ever impossible,’ I feel in a condition of such utter hopelessness as regards my happiness in this world, as, if a voice from heaven convinced me there was no future state, I should feel with regard to my happiness in the next. All this I feel the more, because something tells me what I have lost is partly lost through a rash and premature discovery of my feelings. You have said you liked me—I know you liked me. Why in time might not friendship have grown to love? Why might not a long and tried attachment on my part have at last induced you to believe me worthy of its return? I cannot answer these questions. The want of wealth is the only reason I can think of—any previous attachment I am ignorant of—and if the want of wealth, and only this—though now it be an obstacle—might not time, fortune, or my exertions—untiring with such an object—have overcome it? Oh! if I had

but a hope, however faint, however distant, however fallacious, to help me to bear this sudden blow, I should be as happy as I am now miserable.

“But enough—enough of my own misery, since it will only make you unhappy. I have prayed, and I have found relief. I will make a still further effort. I will be more than calm in your presence, I will, if possible, be cheerful; and although hitherto I dared not look at you, nor hear you speak, without feeling as though drops of molten lead were trickling through my brain, I will bear this, and more than this, till the next few hours shall have relieved me from this torturing constraint.

“When I am gone, reproach not yourself when you think of me. This request you may at least grant. I know from experience, and a firm belief in God’s love, there is no unhappiness, no evil in this world, which we do not bring upon ourselves, and which

we have any to blame for, but ourselves. If for a moment I suffered myself to accuse you, I again entreat you to pardon me. It is no small consolation, to believe one we love to be pure and blameless.

“ I hardly dare hope you will reply to this letter. I scarcely know with what purpose I have written it, unless it be that a hope yet remains. If you do reply, I implore you not to crush it. Leave me this last plank of my wrecked delusions to cling to. I will not abuse your mercy. I promise to abide by your stern injunctions. Through life the memory of you shall be my guide to Heaven. And till death, may God bless you !”

He folded the letter, and directed it. The spirit in which he had concluded was widely different from the one in which he had commenced it. The expression of his grief soothed him. When he had finished, the fierceness of his passion was changed to sadness. He laid

his face on the table, and cried like a child. A kind voice caused him to raise his streaming eyes. He looked up, and saw Mr. Gregory standing before him. He started, and was about to make an angry exclamation ; but the affectionate look of sympathy in the benevolent features of the old man disarmed his indignation. He brushed away his tears, and tried to force a smile in their place.

“I knew there was something wrong,” said Mr. Gregory, seating himself as he spoke. “I did not like to go to bed without having a word with you. Come, tell me, what is it ? an old man’s head may sometimes help a young man’s heart. What’s the matter, More ?”

“Oh, nothing ; merely a fit of indigestion. I am subject to these things, but they soon pass away.”

“I don’t want to intrude upon your secret sorrows,” continued Mr. Gregory, “but I am so vain, you see, of being the confidant of

many of your former secrets, that I flattered myself you would trust me even with this."

"I tell you I have no secret," said Pierce, trying to smile.

"Come, come, indigestion doesn't bring the tears into the eyes of youngsters of your age. Have you quarrelled with Lady Eda?"

"Quarrelled! no. What makes you think that?"

"What? why, the certainty that something has gone wrong between you two. There's only one thing that could happen to make you unhappy that I know of."

"What's that?" asked More.

"Why, a positive question and a negative answer to be sure! but I don't think this is likely."

"Why not?" said Pierce.

"Because it seems to be all plain sailing. It is evident she likes you."

"Liking is not loving," said More.

"That remains to be proved," returned Mr. Gregory.

"What if it has been proved?"

"And her answer was 'no?'" said Mr. Gregory, with a look of surprise.

"Mr. Gregory, you are worming a secret out of me; a secret that is not altogether mine."

"Do you doubt the interest I take in you both?" said Mr. Gregory, feelingly. "I have no other daughter now—I had once—" and the old man's voice trembled as he spoke. "Your secret is safe with me," he added. "She has refused you?"

"For ever," said Pierce, giving way to his emotions as he spoke.

"I am surprised," exclaimed his friend. "Poor fellow!" he said, half to himself. "It is a heavy trial, a very heavy trial for a young heart; One, and only One is able to console us in such afflictions." He took More's hand as he spoke, and his eyes filled with

tears. "Yes, Pierce, I have suffered in my time, but God has always comforted me. Pray to Him."

So saying, Mr. Gregory left the room.

Next morning the chaise was at the door as soon as breakfast was over. Arthur Longvale was perhaps the only person in the house, who sincerely regretted the departure of his friend. More, himself, was able at least to look cheerful; and Lady Eda felt how much better his absence would be for both of them. In the preparation for departure, More watched for an opportunity to put his letter into her hands. She was standing by her cousin; he went up to her to say good-bye, placed the letter in one hand, and pressing the other, said "God bless you!" These were the last words he spoke to her: and from that hour, many a long day intervened before Lady Eda and Pierce More met again.

CHAPTER VII.

THE abrupt and perhaps unexpected termination of this period in our narrative, may possibly be a source of such irritation to the class of critics distinguished by the denomination of 'Malevoli,' that we feel bound to interrupt its progress and pause to make a short deprecatory digression, lest the untimely wrath of these descendants of "Momus and Etcætera the Younger," destroy their own appetite for what is hereafter to follow. To dismiss for ever from the stage of action the all-important

personage of the heroine while one half of the tragedy yet remained to be performed, would be a solecism so contrary to received opinion, that the "second price" would visit their resentment of it upon the manager's or author's head, by totally absenting themselves from the theatre.

If we have been at all successful in painting the portrait of our heroine, such as she really was, to our eyes a very interesting creature, the more gratuitously-unkind must appear the act by which she is removed from our presence. Yet we have no alternative. Of all the qualifications of a historian, veracity is universally admitted to be the most essential. If the young gentleman whose private history we have taken upon ourselves to transmit to posterity, did happen to meet with a "charming creature," we, as historians, are as little responsible for this incident, as for the other which befel him to part without a prospect of meeting her again.

It may be objected that we are writing a novel, and that the method pursued by many novel writers is as follows :—A man of any age under forty is at some period of the first volume to meet with a woman at most thirty-five. If the result be not instant and reciprocal attachment, at all events one of them is in duty bound to fall in love somewhere within the limits of vol. one. Throughout the main portion of vols. two and three, the course of this true love is to be as unsmooth as possible ; in order that all parties, having been tossed and pitched up and down for a good long time, may be as love-sick as the author can ingeniously contrive to make them. In about two chapters from the end of the story, when every possibility of a calm passage has been utterly relinquished, and the passengers are in that state of happy indifference, from their wretchedness, as not to care whether they go to the bottom or survive, a miracle must be performed. A relentless guardian who, in

the natural course of events, would have lived at least ten years longer, dies. Several thousands a year drop in exactly at the right moment ; an objectionable rival is suddenly found with his throat cut ; the bars of a prison window yield to the persuasive teeth of a file ; or the heroine, while being carried off in the midst of a siege, finds herself by the merest accident, in the arms of her lover. He has dashed from somewhere, through a cloud of dust and smoke, and at last stands victorious, with his mistress in one arm, and a sabre covered with dust and gore hanging picturesquely from the other. Subjoined to such climax, is usually the important and satisfactory intelligence that within a twelve-month of the close of the history an increase was made to the population of their native country.

Exceptions to this mode of terminating vol. three are by no means uncommon. In

such cases, in accordance with the above prescription, the circumstances which prevent that very common-place affair—"a happy marriage," must be for ever a source of such unmitigated misfortune, as to render the disappointed ones miserable for the remainder of their lives, and, indeed, every one else miserable who is foolish enough to think of them.

From all who admit such to be the only true model for novel-writing, and from all who are ready to maintain that such models cannot be departed from without complete violation of the entire interest contained in three-volume fabrications, sold for 3*ls.* 6*d.*, we venture very humbly to differ; and are prepared to demonstrate by practical results, as exemplified in this history, that the irretrievable loss of a heroine, however charming, does not necessarily superinduce a morbid and maundering state of mind, afflicting the victim, and every one who comes near him, through life; but that, so far from its

being the "blight" which poets describe as withering their own hearts, and making the hearts of others "mere weights of icy stone," the loss we speak of may, we hope to show, have a highly moral effect upon the mind quite as naturally as an immoral one. And if, by reading the remainder of this narrative, the gall-eaters, to whom we address this little digression, should happen, in the event of their meeting with the aforesaid privation, to profit rather than suffer from it, we are persuaded they will then overlook an irregularity in our conduct which in the end has proved of advantage to themselves, and possibly may to others.

While taking a final leave of Lady Eda Longvale, in whose delightful company we would gladly have spent a few days longer, it must be remembered that her absence is here spoken of only in a material sense—that, in effect, she will still be with us, and that the influence of her virtual presence, and the misfor-

tune of not being able to convert it into an actual one, together with the inferences to be deduced therefrom, constitute a very principal subject matter in the concluding portion of our history.

The morning was cold and drizzly when More reached his lodgings in the Albany at the early hour of four. It was, however, only the middle of September, and there was light enough to show how dirty and yellow London was, when compared with the beautiful country he had just quitted. He was as much disinclined to go to bed as he was to sit up. The housemaid had received no orders to prepare for his arrival; all the furniture was covered with old sheets, which in their turn were covered with dust and blacks. One room looked as gloomy and comfortless as another.

With the help of Mr. Court, his valet, the sheets and blacks were by degrees re-

moved, and the sofa drawn round to the fire. But even the fire was gloomy; it filled the whole room with clouds of the greenest smoke: and nearly ten minutes elapsed before any one discovered the aperture of the stove to be closely shut down. Gradually, external inconveniences were one by one forgotten, and Pierce was left without interruption to the quiet enjoyment of his manifold cares.

How unenviable his train of reflection must have been, may be partly conceived when it is related that the whole of his past life, up to that very moment, appeared to him one long series of events which left no sensation but regret. Each succeeding step in his existence had been more foolish, and attended with worse results than the one before it; and at last his misfortunes had culminated to the highest point of ascendancy to which it was in the power human folly to raise them.

He had not even the common satisfaction of thinking himself ill-used. There was no

one he could possibly blame but himself ; and the mortification at discovering the source of all his grievances in the egregious folly of his own conduct, was but little alleviated by the consideration of how much he should profit by the severity of his experience.

He blushed with shame and confusion at the thought of having presumed to imagine that Lady Eda was in love with him ; and he ground his teeth with vexation for having placed himself in the ridiculous and contemptible position of a rejected suitor. As to the knowledge that thousands of other men had been in a similar position, it was so far from being any consolation to him, that the very commonness of it—the very fact that he had nothing more to be miserable about than they, was in itself an additional cause of annoyance. That a great many women should be false—should be flirts—was a matter of course ; he had met with hundreds such ; they were hardly blameable ; they

could not be otherwise ; it was in their nature to be false ; but that she, Eda Longvale, the realization of his wildest dreams, the perfect being which had always existed in his own brain, but never till now been found—the essence of purity and perfection — the woman who possessed at once every attribute attached to the name of Woman in its divinest sense — that she, for whom he would have died a thousand torturing deaths, or lived a life of slavery—she, on whom he had lavished such passionate love—before whose perfect nature he had bowed in absolute worship—beneath whose feet he had placed a heart, which he knew only too well—not from vanity, but by sad experience—throbbed with fifty pulses for every one of common men—that she—that such a one had spurned him—had ridiculed his intentions—had treated him as if his ocean of love had been the shallow puddle of a school-boy's eye-whim ! It was torture. He

knew his faults, he knew that, however much he loved, he could not make himself worthy of her. But who was worthy of her? Certainly others were rich, but could riches alone buy such as her? When he thought of himself as Pierce More, the plain-featured and the poor, he bitterly felt the audacity he had been guilty of. But when he remembered the trials and hardships he had bravely encountered and as bravely overcome, the acquirements he was master of, which untold wealth alone could never purchase—the power and energy of his mind—his inborn capacity of unmeasured affection—his thirst and admiration for all that was great and noble and true—his yearning for improvement and for the means by which to work it—when he thought of all these, he knew of no earthly object to whom such offerings should bring dishonour.

This first remembrance of what was due to himself, restored him in a measure to a

more tranquil state of mind. He slept for a few hours, and was only aroused after repeated shakings from the hands of Mr. Court, who hastened to convey to him the pleasant intelligence that a man very like a sheriff's officer had been let in by the housemaid, and was now waiting to speak with him.

An unpleasant misgiving crossed him that he was about to be troubled with a fresh dilemma. The suspicious-looking man was admitted, and it required but one glance at his aquiline nose and dark complexion—his extremely bad hat, and his great coat buttoned to the chin, to convince Pierce that the impressions of his valet had not been unfounded.

“Good morning, Sir,” said the Hebrew, through the aquiline organ.

“What do you want?” said More, testily, as if there was the smallest chance of alarming the law's executor.

“Is your name Mr. Pierce Mar, Esquire, Sir?” said the Hebrew.

“Yes.”

“Caush thish ’ere peesh of paper ish for you. ’Ere’s the writ and ’ere’s the copy vitch yer can keep if yer likesh.”

Thus saying, the sheriff’s officer presented More with two small documents: the one on paper was a transcript of the other on parchment. Most men are sufficiently acquainted with the form of the interesting letter which their Sovereign on particular occasions condescends to address to them in the name of their own royal personage. To the few who are yet in blissful ignorance, we beg to present a copy of the formula:

“Victoria, by the grace of God, &c.,

“To Pierce More, of Moreton, in the county of ——

“We command you that within eight days after the service of this writ on you, inclusive of the day of such service, you do cause an

appearance to be entered for you in our court of —— in an action at the suit of Messrs. Gild and Dobigmen, upholsterers ; and take notice, that in default of your so doing, the said Messrs. Gild and Dobigmen may proceed therein to judgment and execution. Witness,” &c.

“ But what the deuce does this mean ?” inquired the astonished More. Why, hasn’t Dobigmen sent in his bill ? I can pay him at once if he sends it in now. Here, Court !”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ The bill for my furniture was never sent in, was it ?”

“ Yes, Sir,” replied the valet, gravely, “ the bill was sent in two or three Christmases running, I forget which now, Sir ; and Dobigmen’s man called ten or a dozen times, and come to be howdashous tiresome at last, Sir. So I told him as ow it was no use their a-calling, and that they adn’t better call no more till further horders. And after that,

Sir, they took to writing a desput quantity of letters, which I took care as they shouldn't be no hobstigle to you, Sir, and so I burnt them as fast as they comed hin. All these," said the valet, pointing to a quantity of letters spread out on the table, "hall these, Sir, come in since we was at Mona; but I think they're mostly bills."

"That'll do then," said More, impatiently; "leave the room, and show that man out. Mind, I'm not at home to anybody. I shall breakfast in half an hour."

And Mr. Court ushered the sheriff's officer from the house, bolting the door behind him, as if to prepare for a regular siege. As soon as they were gone, Pierce examined the handwriting of his correspondents. There were two letters which interested him: one was from Bellerby, the other from his banker. Mr. Bellerby wrote to inform him that more than a year's interest was due on the mortgage which he held on the Moreton estate,

and that he was sorry to be obliged to request immediate payment, but he was obliged to do so, as he had to meet some very pressing demands within a week of the present date.

The letter from his banker advised him, in case he should be ignorant of the circumstance, that he had overdrawn to the amount of nearly a £1000.

The next letter he opened was from the Bank of England.

“Sir,” it ran, “we beg to inform you that a power of attorney has been presented to us, authorizing Gerard Winter to transfer the sum of £10,000, now standing in your name, in the Three per Cent Consols.

“For the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.

“ _____

“N.B.—If this is in accordance with your directions, no answer is required.”

More cast his eye on the date: it was three days old. The two or three last days at Mona had indeed ruined him. But no! Winter must have drawn the money, and have paid it into some other bank. He seized his hat, rushed into the street, drove to Winter's lodgings. Mr. Winter had left town the day before yesterday. His heart sunk within him. He was walking from the door when he met Lord Pumpton.

"Ah, More, how are ye?" said Pumpton, 'Gad, how devilish seedy you look. Got the pip?"

"Where's Winter gone?" said More. "Do you know if he has changed his lodgings?"

"Winter? D—n it! haven't you heard Master Gerard has cut his stick. They say he has let some poor devil in for a good pot. You haven't been bitten, have you? I'm rather sorry; Winter was a d—d shrewd fellow—good-bye."

More returned to the Albany. When at

home he sunk into a chair, and stared vacantly at the fire. At length he rang the bell; the valet entered.

“Court,” said More, “what do I owe you?”

“Eight months wages, Sir, and three months board.”

“Very good. Sell the pianoforte to-day; pay yourself and the housemaid. To-morrow you go.”

“But, Sir—really, Sir.”

“That will do, Court. You know me; leave the room.”

Court stared, shook his head, and did as he was ordered.

More looked round his beautifully furnished room. Each picture, each nick-nack and curiosity passed before his eyes. The sofas, the easy chairs, the piano—all were looked at and considered; for all were looked at for the last time. He smiled.

“What does it matter now?” he said.

“What is money worth? what are these trumperies worth? what is life worth, when *she* is lost?” a tear trickled down his cheek. “Why weep?” he muttered, hastily dashing it away; “silly fool! No, no tears! they are no use; crying won’t make a heart hard. Mine’s too soft by half; has been! has been!”

He paced rapidly up and down the room. Presently he stopped, consulted “Bradshaw’s Railway Guide,” then rang the bell for his servant.

“Court, pack one of my portmanteaus for a week, and have a cab here in twenty minutes. Before you leave put all my books into their cases, and take them to ——, to be left till called for.”

“Won’t you please to take breakfast, Sir?” inquired Mr. Court in rather a pathetic tone of voice.

“No.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT same evening More reached Mossbank Cottage. Mr. Bellerby was from home. Miss Bellerby was unwell and confined to her room. It was late before the attorney came in. He was surprised to see More.

“Surprised, and he might add delighted. He hoped Mr. More would make some stay. Not such quarters as he was used to, but humble people, he trusted, might be hospitable people.”

Mr. Bellerby thought his visitor had come to pay the interest on the mortgage.

“Bless me,” said Mr. Bellerby, when lights were brought in, “bless me, Mr. More, how very ill you look, Sir. Won’t you take anything?—a cup of tea and a little cold meat?”

“I’ll have a glass of brandy, if you’ve got any in the house.”

More had not tasted food since he left Mona.

“I’m sorry to hear Miss Bellerby is not well.”

Mr. Bellerby looked uncomfortable.

“Nothing serious,” said the attorney; “rather nervous; she is suffering from a slight nervous attack; but will be quite well to-morrow, quite well, I hope! Well, Sir, London very gay? I suppose the season is drawing to a termination; is it not. Won’t you come nearer to the fire, Sir? the evenings get very cold at this time of the year.”

“They do,” said More.

There was a pause of some minutes. Business of an unpleasant nature is very hard to introduce in a pleasant way.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Bellerby, breaking the silence, “I suppose, Mr. More, you will drive over and pay a short visit to Moreton. I shall be very happy to accompany you any day you please; I was there myself a day or two since. I never saw Moreton looking more beautiful.”

“It was with reference to the Moreton estate that I came to see you.”

“Indeed,” said Mr. Bellerby, with a complacent smile.

“Yes, I shall have to sell it, after all,” said More.

“Not a very favourable time to sell properties just now,” said Mr. Bellerby.

“I can’t help it. Moreton must be sold, and partly to pay you, Mr. Bellerby.”

“My dear Sir, I am sure I should be extremely sorry to—to—be the cause of—of

—If I might suggest—the funds—any sum that you may have invested would be more available, perhaps. A few days you know, my dear Sir, as far as I am concerned, would not make the smallest difference to me, I am sure.”

“Perhaps,” said More, “you are not the only person who wants money. What if I am in want of some money myself?”

“Your banker, Sir, would surely not object to your overdrawing a little.”

“My banker has reminded me that I have already overdrawn too much.”

“And you won’t touch the funds?” said the attorney.

“I have not a penny in the funds. A friend has relieved me of what I had. In a word, Mr. Bellerby, with the exception of what Moreton will fetch, I am without a shilling.”

A slight twinkling might have been observed under Mr. Bellerby’s bushy eye-

brows, as he thought of foreclosing. It instantly passed off.

“This is very serious, very serious. We must see what can be done, Sir. Property is worth very little just now—worth very little—money is so excessively scarce. However, we must see what can be done to meet your wishes.”

There was another pause.

“I think,” began Mr. Bellerby, “I intimated to you in my last, in our correspondence relative to the raising of further sums on the Moreton estate, that I had been unable to find a mortgagee. You were then, I think, Sir, in communication with Mr. Winter;” here the attorney looked hard at Pierce, and said, “did he, may I ask, advise a more advantageous mode of raising the sum you required?”

“He did. It was by following his advice that I now find myself in the present difficulty.”

“ Indeed !” said Mr. Bellerby, with affected surprise. “ Would you like to see your room, Sir ? To-morrow we will endeavour to make arrangements for the sale of your estate.”

The sudden and severe commencement of his misfortunes at Mona had, as we have seen, thrown Pierce More into a state of mind which in a short time must have seriously affected his health. The second shock, on his arrival in London, had perhaps for the moment counteracted the effect of the first. As soon, however, as he had sufficiently recovered from the surprise of finding himself a ruined man, his thoughts again recurred to Lady Eda as by far the bitterest loss of the two. Added to these trials, enough in themselves to stagger the strongest constitution, Pierce had not touched any food for nearly eight-and-forty hours. He sat up through the night, dozing and dreaming of all that happened to him. At breakfast he was too unwell to keep his place at table.

About the middle of the day Miss Bellerby made her appearance. She, too, looked harassed and ill; but she did her best to be kind and hospitable to her father's guest. With the quickness of a woman's tact, she soon discovered that Pierce's indisposition was more than a slight attack of illness; there was a look of deep melancholy in his face which, as she sometimes observed when he was not aware of her presence, changed for a second or so into an expression of anguish so acute that she felt convinced bodily suffering alone could not produce it.

How touchingly beautiful is the unselfishness of woman! How incomprehensible to men is that wonderful nature which makes woman forget herself and all she suffers, the very instant another is in pain! For our part, we are very much in the habit of forming our estimate of the characters of men by the estimation in which they hold their

sister race ; convinced there can be nothing noble in that mind which contemplates the loveliness of woman's nature through the deformity of its own callousness. We admire the man who, like the sentimental and kind-hearted Sterne, "has been in love with some princess or other all his life, hoping to go on so till he dies ; being firmly persuaded that if ever he does a mean action, it must be in some interval betwixt one passion and another." Of all human qualities—and it is man's privilege to admire at least qualities he scarce hopes to attain—this perfect unselfishness is in the one sex the most engaging—to the other the most impossible.

Mary Bellerby instantly bade her own ills rest in the most peremptory terms, when she discovered that Pierce was really unhappy. She, poor girl!—and it cost her a hard struggle—forgot all about her aching heart and head when, with a cheering smile, she

mixed an effervescing draught to quench the first sparks of low fever already beginning to burn in the heavy eye and parched tongue of her patient. She knew nothing could have brought him to Mossbank but business ; and she guessed, from what she had before heard of his extravagance, that it must be business of a disagreeable kind. On no account would she permit her father to speak to him on these topics.

Towards night, Pierce was so much worse that a doctor was sent for. He was pronounced to be in the first stage of fever, and ordered to be kept extremely quiet, as the symptoms were of the most serious order. For nearly a week, according to the reports of the medical man, his recovery was a matter of considerable uncertainty. When out of danger, he was removed to a sofa in the drawing-room ; so reduced and weakened was he by the malignity of the disease, that he required close and constant attention.

Fortunately for him, gentle and unwearying hands were ever ready to minister to his wants. To smoothe his pillow, to gratify the little whims of sickness, to whip on the flagging hours by the brightness of her presence, to read aloud to him, and sometimes to play and sing, were the constant duties which Mary Bellerby imposed upon herself.

Let not fashion's prude dame raise her dye-stained eyebrows, and shrug her withered shoulders lest modesty be offended. In lengthening her little visits from five minutes to ten, till at last she came to sit whole hours in his company, Mary Bellerby derived no pleasure from such employment beyond that of doing her duty as a Christian. Her heart was still in one sense true to the man who had abandoned her. Winter, as we shall see, had been to Mossbank, and had behaved to her as infamously as man could behave. She resented the baseness of his

conduct: she had discovered the hollowness of his heart; but as she was yet ignorant in what way he had acted dishonourably to any one except herself, she forgave him the injury, although she resolved never again to think of him as a lover.

In the commencement of our history, we have seen how ready she was to believe the integrity of Winter's motives; but taught, as all women are from their earliest commerce with society, to act on the defensive—by preserving a strict watch over those treasures of the heart which vain men so dishonourably trifle with, and which, when lost, are seldom recovered—Mary Bellerby never surrendered her mind so completely to the influence of Winter's cold proofs of attachment, as to have been at any time incapable of exerting that command over herself which she well knew was essential to her happiness.

Thus far her heart was still true to

Winter. Nothing but her sense of duty, and the kindness of her disposition, could, under the remembrance of her own loss, and of the indignity she had been made to suffer, have induced her, at such a time, to lend her thoughts and assiduity for the sake of a young man whom she had not seen more than half-a-dozen times before.

We are by no means prepared to assert that the duty was not gradually wearing into a pleasure. All duties will become palatable if persevered in. Pierce was so grateful for every little attention paid him, that his gratitude could scarce be otherwise than a strong incentive to his benefactress. He prided himself on his turn for sociability; indeed, he was a good talker, and the plot of a romance, the colouring of a drawing, the merits of a piece of music, were subjects which, to discuss with his fair nurse, often carried him away from his own gloomy thoughts, and, to judge from the animated

tone the discussions assumed on both sides, had often the same happy effect upon Mary Bellerby.

All this while, the attorney stuck closely to his office; now and then only introducing the object of More's visit to assure him every inquiry was being made throughout the county for a purchaser. Mr. Bellerby showed no anxiety for the hasty recovery of his guest; nor did he care to interrupt the familiar intercourse of the young people.

If he had any intentions of encouraging a closer alliance, such a design was as little participated in by Pierce as by the attorney's daughter.

When, in time, Pierce recovered, he desired Mr. Bellerby to effect the sale of Moreton without delay, even at a serious loss. He was determined to return to London, where, by engaging in the active pursuit of some honourable profession, he hoped his small income would be sufficient to maintain

him at least comfortably ; and he trusted to the retirement he intended henceforth to maintain, as the most rational means of recovering his lost peace of mind.

As soon as his strength permitted he wrote to Mr. Gregory, informing him of the ruin which unexpectedly had been brought upon him. The tone of his letter showed how his spirit had been chastened and subdued by the two trials. He talked much of the beauty of Lady Eda's character, declaring he had never thoroughly appreciated it until now. He saw how he had been led away by the astonishing simplicity of her nature. He could not have supposed it possible for any woman to behave to a man as she had behaved to him, without experiencing those sentiments which such behaviour is always supposed to indicate. Now, he recognized in her conduct that total absence of affectation, and that purity of motive, to which he was before a stranger.

Such characteristics were the more admirable, because the usages of society made it an offence to be natural. It was her freedom from this vile restraint he had so unfortunately mistaken for what in others would have been a positive demonstration of something more than friendship. He accused himself of want of generosity in putting any construction but the right one on the acts of such a rare and noble creature. He deserved not only the rebuff he had met with, he deserved to lose even her friendship. As to the loss of his property, he looked upon this as a sort of chastisement for his past misdeeds. The idolatrous affection he had cherished towards Lady Eda was in itself enough to ensure some visitation of evil. He was determined, however, to bear the rod as unflinchingly as he could. He knew it must take a long time to heal the wound in his heart, but both this infliction and the other were far easier to bow to submissively, now that he could call

to his aid the excellent precepts Mr. Gregory had laboured to imbue his mind with. Never could he sufficiently thank his kind master for those moral lessons and examples which taught him the comfort of resignation and trust. He concluded by expressing his gratitude for the kindness he had accidentally received in an hour of so much need; and, with a request for a few lines of advice, hoped Mr. Gregory would visit him on his way through town. To this letter he received an answer by return of post. We will take the liberty of giving it, with his rejoinder, at full length:

“Tell me not, my dear Pierce—for so you must permit me to address you—tell me not of lessons set you, and Christian-like example: in your resignation under what is notoriously considered as one, at least, of the heaviest trials to humanity, you teach me a lesson of magnanimous self-conquest I shall do well to

follow. What is to be the sequel to these events of the last few days is known to One alone ; but from the two first acts of the drama, you have educed a triumph greater than success—I mean the mastery of your own mind. The victory is indeed worth the struggle, and the beautiful compensation of all discipline is, that every encounter strengthens us for the next that is to come.

“ You are right in all you say of Lady Eda : since your departure I have seen more of her, and know her better than ever. I did not hesitate to talk to her upon the subject of your attachment. At first she refused to speak of it, and seemed astonished that you should have confided the secret to me ; but I convinced her of the interest I felt in both of you, and having been honoured with much of your confidence, I claimed the right of a very old friend, to become her adviser also. She is so unfeignedly sorry for having caused you pain, and blames her own

conduct so severely for having inadvertently encouraged your hopes, that I am well persuaded she erred entirely through that simplicity of heart, and singleness of purpose which you so generously attribute to her.

“It is evident to me she liked you much ; but it is equally evident that she never for a moment entertained any feeling beyond the warmest friendship. The reflection that such has been the case, now operates strongly on her mind ; I observe a firmness and decision in her character that I was not before acquainted with. She has expressed to me in such positive terms her determination of adhering to her present sentiments, and the utter impossibility of ever regarding you in any light but as a friend, that I feel it my duty, and the kindest act I can perform, to dash any secret hope that you may unwittingly be treasuring in your I fear too fond heart.

“She knows I am writing, though she will

not see my letter, and desires me to convey to you her kind remembrances.

“ And now, my dear Pierce, for the advice you ask of me. Let me for an instant examine your natural disposition. According to your account of the past actions of your life, I should imagine that your constant aim has been to arrive at happiness—that goal of all mankind—by an endeavour to heighten the enjoyment of life by an unnatural excess of its emotions. Your early love of excitement, your passion for the gaming-table, your rash determinations, your sanguine temperament, your easy credulity, the visionary nature of your religious views, the romantic warmth of your attachments, and the reckless impetuosity with which you embrace the most seductive of all the passions, at once afford materials which, combined, almost invariably result in unhappy consequences. There is, however, one power that may convert these elements into the highest of the social blessings.

That power is self-control. You possess it in no small degree; and it is by stimulating yourself to the practice of self-examination and self-government, that my advice can alone be of service to you.

“ There are certain aphorisms I always bear in mind: they are simple and trite, but nevertheless true. I borrow them from a favourite author:

“ ‘ 1.—He who aspires the most greedily to happiness, is always the most miserable of men.’

“ ‘ 2.—The unhappiness of mankind arises in the disproportion their desires bear to their capacity for gratifying them; and therefore, to diminish the excess of the desires over the faculties—to proportion the will to the power—must ever form the basis of human wisdom.’

“ ‘ 3.—Beyond the One Being who is self-existent, there is nothing perfectly beautiful—*il n’y a rien de beau,*’ says my author, ‘ *que ce qui n’est pas* but that which is imaginary.’

“ ‘4.—Would you live happy and wise, attach your heart alone to that beauty which does not perish.’

“ Henceforth let me persuade you to regulate your conduct by these truths. Remember the advantages with which you are gifted ; consider the benefits you may not only derive from, but confer by them. Prescribe for yourself some plan of action which shall fully engage you. Let the main objects of your life be to strengthen your good purposes, and to labour for the happiness of your fellow-creatures ; and—God helping—you will at last ride triumphant through the heaviest storm ; the exercise of virtue will be as easy and habitual as its rewards are certain ; goodness and happiness will be synonymous terms ; and you will then realize the true glory of life—the blessed hope of its eternal progress and duration.

“ I fear I have been rather voluminous, but the consideration of these subjects is always

interesting to me. I was as hot-blooded as yourself once, but I have eaten my peck of calamities as well as you ; and an old man has little consolation in this world, if he does not seek it in a better, and turn as he best may, others into the same track. With this assurance, believe me, few things can give me so much pleasure as the affection you kindly express, and which, in truth, I reciprocate. God be with you ! We shall meet, as I hope, in London.

“ WILLIAM GREGORY.”

“ My dear Mr Gregory,

“ It is not without some hesitation that I have resolved to answer your very kind letter as I am about to do. That I might be desirous to give further proof of what you are pleased to call my moral courage, and so to elicit further praise from you, is naturally my first apprehension ; but a little reflection persuades me that my fears are groundless.

The love of approbation is, I know, dangerous if too much indulged in, but it is not on this account to be entirely rooted out. Doubtless the love of praise is implanted in our natures as one of the most powerful incentives to virtue. The good and true force admiration from the meanest soul; and the golden opinion of our fellow-creatures is never despised except by those who are lost to a sense of shame.

“On reflection, then, I am persuaded that I need not fear the sweet unction with which you flatter me; for though deliciously sweet to the first taste, the after taste is somewhat bitter. Commendation can afford but a short-lived pleasure to one truly convinced of his unworthiness. It rather makes him sad than joyful to think that he *might* but *does not* deserve it.

“I would not deceive you. The course of discipline I have marked out for myself, is, I freely own, dictated to me far less by any

sense of real duty than by the belief that such a course is the surest way to regain my happiness. Think you, that any sense of duty would have hindered me from recalling the happy delirium that once infatuated me, did I not purchase the enjoyment with such bitter pangs that I dare no longer recur to the past? No; by degrees I am acquiring more control over my own mind; and by suffocating, at the moment of their birth, all ideas in the least connected with that fatal era, I hope at length to beat off the intrusion of events which it must be impossible for me ever to remember without a pang.

“Unfortunately the bent of my disposition has always been to revel with a sort of morbid delight in the ‘luxury of grief.’ I have lately learnt the meaning of this insane affection: I see clearly that it arises in a pleasure we take in imagining ourselves to be objects of the most profound pity. To indulge in the remembrance of affliction

from such a motive, to exasperate calamity by representing oneself to oneself as an object deserving the sympathy and consolation of others, when we have it in our own power to make ourselves independent by the use of our own energies, would, if the case were mine, deprive me of all self-respect. I feel, now even, that it would have been far nobler in me to have entombed my sorrow for ever in my own breast, instead of seeking commiseration by imparting it to another, even though that other be such a friend as yourself. To have relied solely for comfort on the consciousness of having acted rightly while I suffered deeply, would have been more gratifying to look back upon than a pity I should despise, or the praise I do not deserve.

“Your maxims are excellent; I will not forget them. You needed hardly to have reminded me of the secret of my great misfortune. I was never so blinded by my infatuation as not to see it was infatuation

which possessed me. As to *true love*, I want no Ghost from Denmark to convince me it is the greatest of all delusions, or that the object we love is at any time anything but the bare stock on which we engraft the image of our phantasy. Do not think this a contradiction of what I have before said of Lady Eda. I do not recant one syllable. As I become released from the thralldom of a passion which compelled me blindly to worship qualities she perhaps did not possess, the light of returning reason leads me to admire those rare qualities, which then, I did not even look for, but which in truth distinguish her. Were our admiration and desire of possession confined to reality, *reality* would not deceive us. It is ignorance exalted on the wings of imagination, that lifts us from the calmness of the temperate, to plunge us into the whirlwinds of the torrid zone. Once more, a thousand thanks for

your excellent advice, and believe me
ever

“Yours, most gratefully,

“PIERCE MORE.

“P.S.—Please do not send me any more
‘kind remembrances,’ they are more cruel
than kind. A waggon-load of ‘forgets’
would be of some service.”

“Mona Castle, August, 184—.

“My dear Pierce,

“You have turned philosopher and stoic,
I find. Like the Lacedemonian youth with
his fox, you would rather have your bowels
torn out than utter a cry. The gist of your
letter is that you have preferred policy to
virtue. I maintain that virtue is the best
policy; and that in pursuing the course most
conducive to your happiness, you have chosen
the wisest and most virtuous one. The
modest opinion you entertain of the merits of

your conduct does not render you the less praiseworthy ; on the contrary, such diffidence, or rather such a sense of our unworthiness, is the best proof that we are on the road to improvement. Remember what I once told you of trials, how essential they are to the calling forth of strength. Rest assured that all burdens imposed by a just Providence are proportioned to our strength ; and be happy, and modestly rejoice that the unusual greatness of your trials affords you occasion to exert the unusual power you have within you to combat them.

“To any young person but yourself in a similar position, I should recommend travelling and a change of scene ; but you have travelled enough, and in one respect you have lived longer than many men of twice your age. To you, therefore, I would repeat the advice contained in the close of my last letter—on no account would I have your mind disturbed in any way, but by wholesome ac-

tion. I would that this lesson may take deep root ; not that you should brood over it—and this you seem unlikely to do—but that you should not altogether forget it ; for I look upon such trials to such minds as yours as the greatest blessings that can be bestowed upon them ; because, if I do not greatly err, experience tells me few have felt a true spirit of piety who have not undergone a large share of sorrow. Who but he who has despaired of all earthly comfort can have experienced that intense longing for a peace nowhere to be found on earth. It seems, almost, as if a certain sum of evil was essential to even a small degree of religious feeling ; as if the choicest blessings were regarded with indifference—as matters of course—and as if we were only to be reminded of the Giver when for a moment He deprived us of His gift. How much wiser should we be, could we bear in mind that all absence of pain is pleasure ; all freedom from want is

wealth ; that all we enjoy is a gratuitous blessing ; that misery might, but for the love of God, have been the greater instead of, by very much, the lesser portion of our existence ; that even if misery were in exact proportion to happiness, that if they were so intermingled that neither predominated, we should, in all probability, still think life worth having. If we could bear all this constantly in mind, it seems to me we might the more securely enjoy our possessions in preparing ourselves for the loss of them. Ingratitude would then be gone, and when gone, no longer need the goad to drive it off.

“The loss of your property you bear nobly. It is natural in the present posture of your mind that you should feel the other loss more. But as there is always a bright as well as a gloomy side to the face of Fortune, I am disposed to think, if both ills were destined to befall you, it were best that they

happened at the same moment, inasmuch as they serve to counterbalance each other. 'Fair weather cometh out of the north;' there may yet be some 'milk-white day' in store for you. That it may soon come, is the earnest wish of your sincere friend,

“ W. GREGORY.”

CHAPTER IX.

By writing and receiving such letters as the above, More was learning to reap the best fruits of adversity. He was daily recovering his health both of mind and body. Mr. Bellerby saw his impatience to return to town, and calculated that the moment had come to relieve his impatience by making the final arrangements for the sale of the estate. The attorney found his guest willing to accede to almost any terms; and it may easily be conceived that he did not let the

opportunity slip through his fingers without making the most of it.

Of course he continued to urge the impossibility of meeting with a purchaser, and of course he did not omit to explain to Mr. More the "alarming sacrifice" he, Mr. Bellerby, was about to make in becoming the purchaser himself. There was one point in the transaction which created a difficulty that went hard to cancel the whole business. This was the sale of the house together with the estate. More stoutly refused to part with the home of his fathers, and Mr. Bellerby as positively declared he had never dreamt of buying the estate without the house. He demonstrated by the most lucid propositions that the house was not only useless without the estate, but that the money raised by the sale of the land, after paying the debts and the interest on the former mortgage, would be totally inadequate to enable Mr. More to live there, or even to keep the house in common

repair. Pierce argued that until lately he had always had a tenant at Moreton Hall, and he saw no reason why he should not find another. Mr. Bellerby endeavoured to convince him he would with difficulty find a tenant, even if he should permit one to live there for nothing. After which slur on the Hall, Pierce wanted to know why Mr. Bellerby was so anxious to buy it.

Mr. Bellerby said it would cost him a fortune to render it habitable, but he was prepared to spend a large sum in repairing it; and, in short, he had always understood that the house was to be sold with the rest of the property.

“Then,” said More, “you may understand for the future the house is not to be sold with the rest of the property.”

“And I am to understand, Sir,” said Mr. Bellerby, “you will let the house go to ruin? for, as I said before, you will have no means to keep it up.”

“Whether it falls to ruin or not,” replied Pierce, getting impatient, “I do not care one sixpence ; and I don’t see, Mr. Bellerby, how the tumbling down of my house is anybody’s business but my own. And once for all, Sir, I repeat, so long as I live, Moreton Hall will never be sold. If the rain comes through the roof of the garret to-day, it may, for all I care, come through the cellar to-morrow ; and if I knew for certain that it would be level with the ground in a week, I would not sell it to save it. You have my answer.”

“Well, Sir,” said Mr. Bellerby, “then I decline to purchase.”

“As you please,” returned the other. “Then I must look out for some one else.”

“But, Sir, let me tell you, I can’t be put off in this way. I understood the terms on which you authorized me to dispose of Moreton were—”

“And now, Sir,” said More, interrupting

him, "you learn from me they are not what you supposed they were, that's all."

"But," rejoined the attorney, growing redder and more emphatic, "that, Sir, is not all, Sir; and what's more, Sir, I can't be put off any longer in this way. You may not sell the estate for some time, and I am not disposed to have the payment of the interest on the mortgage deferred any longer, I can tell you, Sir; and so—"

"And so," interposed Pierce, the quickness of whose temper kept pace with the attorney's, and threatened soon to outstrip it, "and so I am to sell at a loss to pay you at once, Sir? I understood from you, a day or two since, a week would make no sort of difference to you—that, in fact, you would be extremely sorry to put me to any inconvenience—and I don't know what else beside. I now see how perfectly disinterested your benevolence was, and how much indebted I am to you for your readiness to assist me.

Really, Sir, I hardly know how to express my gratitude."

"Come, Sir, this insolence—"

"Insolence!" cried More, bursting forth in the most vehement manner—"what the devil do you mean by insolence, Sir? Haven't you tried to cheat me—yes, cheat me—you needn't look in that way, Mr. Bellerby—I repeat it—haven't you tried to cheat me under the pretence that you could find no one to buy my estate, meaning all the while to buy it yourself? I see through your tricks now, Sir. You think because I have been gulled and made a fool of by one rascal, that I am going to be made a fool of by another. What do I mean?" he cried, getting fiercer, and answering an interjection of the attorney's. "What do I mean? Why I mean what I say, that directly a man begins to go down-hill in this world, every rascal gives him a kick, and every fellow, who can hide his villain's face beneath the

mask of the law, ferrets out his game and never forgives himself if he fails to fill his own cursed maw as well as the rest of 'em. I know what you would be at. Thank God, one doesn't get one's experience for nothing ! I tell you, Sir, you shan't have one pinch of dust out of the whole estate, and if I starve for it, I'll sell it to some one else."

"Of course, Sir," answered the attorney, suddenly changing the expression of his features from anger to obsequiousness, "of course, Mr. More, you will please yourself, Sir. It was only my miscomprehension—that is, the terms were not sufficiently definite. You must pardon the warmth of my manner. I perfectly understand you now, Sir—perfectly. I am sure my mistake was enough to irritate you—to irritate anybody, in fact. But we won't say anything more about it at present. Leave it to me, Sir: I am sure you will trust to my honour

to do my best for you. You mustn't be angry, Sir."

"Oh ! not at all," said More, "I'm not the least angry ; only when a man is all but ruined, you know, Mr. Bellerby, it's deucedly annoying to fancy people don't sufficiently consider one's misfortunes. You must forgive me," he continued, softening down as he spoke, "if I used rather strong language ; but the fact is, I have a particular weakness about the house I was born and brought up in. If I felt inclined to sell it at all, I would as soon let you have it as anybody else ; whether it is family pride or what I don't know, but talking of selling Moreton Hall always gravels me more than anything in the world."

"Well, Sir," said the attorney, smiling and holding out his hand, "we'll say no more about it."

Pierce accepted the proffered hand, and, as he shook it, chanced to catch such a

disagreeable expression in Mr. Bellerby's face that he could hardly refrain from the shudder a sudden feeling of mistrust brought over him.

The day after this little quarrel, the attorney proposed to take Pierce over to Moreton. The drive was considered one of the prettiest in the neighbourhood ; and as Miss Bellerby had never seen the Hall, she was easily persuaded to accompany her father and his young client. The vehicle, in which they were to make the excursion was a small four-wheel carriage, with places for two on the box, and two inside. This carriage never appeared in public except on very rare or important occasions. The attorney himself, whensoever business called him from home, or when he sent little Mobbs abroad to collect the rents of the several estates of which he was the receiver, made use of a gig that had been lined, painted, and repaired, until—as physiologists pretend is the case with

the human body every seven years—hardly a particle of the original matter remained. This gig was drawn by a lean and leggy animal, which Mr. Bellerby boasted to have driven for a quarter of a century. He always allowed it to go its own pace, the peculiarities of which are common to all the venerable of its faithful race; they consist in a slovenly clicking of the fore and hind feet, and a periodical and ponderous nodding of the head, marking time, as it were, to the somniferous music of the heels.

The only other horse in the establishment was Miss Bellerby's hack, in every respect the opposite to its companion. When, therefore, the four-wheel carriage was drawn out, Miss Bellerby's riding-horse had to undergo the degradation of the collar, and take his place in the yoke by the side of the ancient poster.

The young lady never failed to remonstrate with her papa at such a shameful abuse of

what she considered to be her private property, and invariably got his promise in the end to buy a pair of carriage-horses more suitable and better matched than the two he always used. But so seldom was Mossbank Cottage honoured with the presence of guests whom Mr. Bellerby thought worthy of the distinguished privilege of a drive in the four-wheel, that the promise was forgotten, or, at all events, the purchase was postponed till the never-coming day, when, as Mr. Bellerby told his daughter, he hoped better to afford the extravagance of such an investment.

Mary was in some measure appeased for the cruel treatment her pet was made to suffer, by the humane style of coachmanship practised by her father. The fact was, Mr. Bellerby's only male-servant, the gardener, combined, with his out-door labour, the multifarious avocations of groom or stableman, brewer, shoeblack, knife-cleaner, &c., not to mention sweetheart to the cook and maid-

servant, and all the variety of small duties which pertain to a useful and willing man. This polyonomous being, therefore, could not be spared from the premises. Besides, Mr. Bellerby had his fears lest the universal turn of his gardener's propensities might possibly cause him to upset the four-wheel, if the reins were ever intrusted to his hands.

It was impossible to go very fast with a couple of animals so ill-assorted ; and, what with flogging the one, and holding in the other, Mr. Bellerby had as much as he could do to keep clear of the Scyllas and Charybdises, or rather banks and ruts, of the narrow little lanes through which their road to Moreton lay.

The warmth of the weather, the fragrance of the atmosphere, the beauty of the scenery, acted soothingly on Pierce's spirits : it rendered him almost too lazy to think ; and neither he nor his companion exchanged thoughts until they had driven some seven or eight miles. Gradually

the features of the country became more and more familiar to Pierce's eye. It was now many years since he had visited his family seat. The last time he had been there was on the occasion of his mother's funeral, and from that day to the present he had never had sufficient courage to return.

As he drove along, a line of copse-wood, a mill, a church-steeple, or some such prominent object brought back at once even the shape of the fields around them, and the very thoughts that had occurred to him when last upon the spot. What recollections filled his breast as he passed through the village of Moreton! How distinctly he remembered the many times he had walked there by the path from the Hall across the fields, accompanying his mother in her daily visits to the sick and poor! With what pleasing sadness he recalled the reverential bows and grateful looks that old and young alike showed eagerness to pay her as

she passed from house to house ! The inside of all the cottages was as well known to him as the out. He could picture to himself the bed of death, the emaciated victim of decline, by whose side his mother would sit, offering little presents from the Hall of fruits and wine—himself silently watching in that sick room the awful dissolution of the sufferer, and the pious look of love and charity in his mother's face. The dusty old wooden clock too was not forgotten, with its three gilt knobs and mysterious cupboard. He could still hear it ticking that hollow sound, which rung to superstitious ears the knell of death !

The village itself was not a bit changed ; the cottages stood exactly as they used to stand ; perhaps the roses and creepers his mother had taken pains to train against their walls, that her village might look neat and pretty, had grown taller and more luxuriant ; but the old beech which stood in the front of

the public-house seemed no bigger or more ancient than of yore ; old men were still sitting beneath its shade, and children were still hiding and playing about its feet. Lads were whistling to a waggon team, or rattling by in farm tumblers with a tenant's name upon them. These were not the lads he used to know. Their size, their ways and occupations were the same, but the young faces he remembered eight years ago were seldom to be recognized in the tanned and set features of manhood.

The villagers stared at the carriage as it drove through. Now and then a man or woman touched a hat or dropped a courtesy, but it was to the attorney, and not to Pierce who had ceased to be known.

"Is it very long, Mr. More," inquired Miss Bellerby, "since you last visited your place?"

"About eight years," he replied.

“I wonder that you do not come here oftener,” said Mary. “It seems such a lovely country.”

“So it is; but what on earth could I do, living down here by myself? There isn’t a railroad within twelve miles of me.”

“I should have thought that one of the greatest charms about it.”

“So I might think now; but I was not always such an admirer of solitude as I am inclined to be at present. I used to be rather fond of society—that is to say, after my mother’s death there was no sort of inducement to live here; and one formed a new set of friends and acquaintances, and it is always easier to see people in London than anywhere else in the world.”

“But there even you live very much by yourself, do you not?”

“Yes, perhaps rather more so than most

people ; but when one cannot live with those one likes, it is as well to live apart from those one does not like. But," he added, with a sigh, "it makes little difference to me whether I live in the world or out of it, for my tastes naturally lead me to seek retirement."

"Yet you have travelled a great deal, and have seen much of the world. That must be the greatest pleasure possible, I should think. I should like to start to-morrow, and go to some wonderful place where nobody had ever been before. I do so like seeing a new place. Even this sort of thing, you can't fancy what immense fun it is to me to drive about with papa to see places when we have anybody staying with us. I expect to be quite charmed with Moreton Hall: I have heard it is so pretty. How very odd it must seem to you coming back here again after being so long away. I don't know what I should do if I were

coming back to Mossbank after being eight years from home ; I think I should get out of the carriage and run on, so as to get there before any one else, and be quite alone."

"How strange," said More, "that is exactly what I feel inclined to do myself."

"Oh, well, do go on ; and I'll tell papa to stop, and we will give the horses something to eat here, and you shall have an hour's start."

"No, never mind," said More, laughing at Mary's earnestness and simplicity. "One has to learn to keep one's feelings to oneself in this world. I find it is very little use or satisfaction giving way to them."

"Oh, but I think that's very wrong," said Mary : "I hate people to keep all their best feelings to themselves, as if they were ashamed of letting other people know they had any good feelings. It seems to me

most natural that you should have all sorts of delightful associations about this place, and why should you not indulge in them?"

"So I can," said More; "but you say it is very wrong not to tell them to others; and then you want to send me on to indulge in them all by myself."

"Ah, but I don't mean that; I mean it would be better you should enjoy them alone, than that the presence of other people should make you smother them altogether."

"Oh, I see," said Pierce, smiling, "you are afraid the smothering business will make me such bad company that you want to be rid of me before it comes on."

"Now, how can you say so, Mr. More? After that, I can't think of letting you go. I ought to insist on your describing to me the exact state of your feelings all the way along."

There was an archness in Mary's manner

as she spoke this last sentence that again brought a smile into his face.

“Really, Miss Bellerby,” said he, laughing, “in such company, what could I have been thinking of all the way?”

Mary did not look at all pleased.

“No, seriously,” she replied, “what were you thinking of?”

“Well, seriously, I believe I was thinking of nothing at all, as near as I can recollect.”

“Look,” said Mr. Bellerby, turning round on the box, “there are the chimneys over the top of that wood.”

“Where, where?” asked Mary, standing up to see them. “Do show me where they are, Mr. More.”

“I will directly,” answered he. “You will see the house at the next turn of the road.”

“And when will that be?”

“In about ten minutes,” said Pierce,

amused at her childish impatience. "You see that stile into the lane just before us; it was on this spot that I met with the accident which lamed me."

"Indeed," said Mary, looking much concerned. "How?"

"Why, I can hardly help laughing at my clumsiness, though it did make me a cripple for life. I had been fishing in the brook there, and I heard a rattling noise in the lane; I looked to see what it was, and observed my mother's pony-carriage, with the ponies tearing along as hard as they could go. In an instant it struck me they were running away, for I knew they were quite as much as my mother could manage. By the turn in the lane, I thought if I hastened to this stile, I could cut them off. I was just in time. I hardly knew what I was doing, but with the foolhardiness of a boy, I jumped the stile, and fell into the lane just as the ponies were galloping up.

“ My sudden apparition had an effect which I had not the least anticipated, or foreseen. The ponies shyed, to avoid trampling on my body ; both wheels passed over one of my legs, and the carriage was torn against the opposite bank, so that it was instantly upset, and my mother thrown into the road. By the greatest good-fortune she was not the least injured ; but on examining my leg, it was found broken in two places.

“ You may imagine what must have been a mother’s sensations at such an accident. She felt, I am sure, as if she had killed me. She threw herself on the ground, and tearing up her shawl, bound the fractured limb with a skill inspired by desperation. The first person who met the ponies, with the shattered fragments of the little carriage, immediately recognized it, and hastened with all speed to the place where we were. The man who discovered us in this wretched plight, chanced to be a farmer living close at hand ;

he soon brought a large cart, in which he placed us both. I lay upon my mother's lap; but, even though supported in this way, I shall never forget the agony which every jolt in the springless cart shot through my whole body, till at last I fainted with the pain."

CHAPTER X.

HERE Mr. Bellerby pulled up to open a gate into the park, and Mary, who had been listening to Pierce's conversation, looked round to make an exclamation of delight at the beautiful avenue which led to the house. The carriage was driven to the stables, where no one now lived but an old woman, who kept the key of the Hall, and her son, who was employed to take care of the premises.

"That old woman," said Pierce to Miss

Bellerby, "was my nurse; she will not recognize me. We will hear what she says about me. I have no doubt I shall be severely spoken of, for not having been near the place so long."

"Papa," whispered Mary, "don't tell the old woman who Mr. More is; we want to hear what she says of him."

"Well, Nanny," said Mr. Bellerby, addressing the old crone, "have you got the key of the Hall? I have brought a gentleman over to see the place."

"Yes, yes," she muttered, taking a glance the while at the three visitors, "Nanny's got the key. But like enough it won't open any; there be a sight o' rust in the locks, I'd lay a beet;" and the old woman hobbled in to fetch her cloak and stick.

"You don't mean to say," said Mary, "that that funny old thing was your nurse? I should have thought she had more likely been your father's nurse."

“Well, I believe she was—at least, I know she has lived in the family in one capacity or other for the last forty years; and a more faithful and attached servant never breathed.”

“I wonder in all that time,” said Mary, “she never learnt to speak better English: I declare I can hardly make out what she says.”

“She always talked that way,” said Pierce; “I remember she had picked up some long words which she misapplied and mispronounced right and left whenever she could get them in; but I suppose she has forgotten them; I forget them myself now. She was very fond of talking of the *pelebiens*, meaning the lower class, whom she pretended to have a great contempt for; and then she always called London the *metrolopolis*. We’ll see if we can’t draw her out. Here she comes.”

“Has there been any one at Moreton lately, Nanny, to look at the house?” inquired the attorney.

“Ne’er a one. What! I spose this young lady and genelum wants to take the place, don’t they? It’s good time som ’un took it afore it all falls to bits.”

“Have you heard anything of the master lately?” said Miss Bellerby.

“What, Measter More?” said the old woman, stopping to look at the inquirer; then shaking her head. “No, don’t hear much o’ him.”

“Do you know where he is now?” asked Mary.

“I know!” shrieked the old woman, “no, nor no one else, I’d lay a beet. Measter Pierce,” she said, again stopping, and turning to her audience, as if “Measter Pierce” could not fail to be the most interesting person in the world to all who had ever heard his name; “he haven’t been to Moreton Hall this eight year come the twenty-fourth of this month, that’s the day after his blessed lady mother was put in the family wault besides

t'ould measter, and I shall never forget the day as long as I live," and here Nanny's eyes filled with tears. "She was a good lady, bless her, she was; there waren't ne'er another like her, not one!" and Nanny went off sobbing and entirely forgot her blessed lady's son.

"But what came of the young gentleman, the present owner?" said Pierce, hiding his mouth with the handle of Miss Bellerby's parasol, and slightly changing his voice as he spoke.

Nanny turned sharp round, and looked for a moment hard at the speaker; then shaking her head as if her ears had deceived her, "What came of he? how do I know? eight year come this month I never catched glint on him; nor han't heerd but very little of him, and what I did hear wasn't sich as did me any good."

"How's that?" said Pierce.

"How's that," echoed Nanny; "why, I heerd he'd growed to be a reglar foreigner;

and the folks hereaway said he spent all his money out of the place and got ruined, and had writ an order to sell the whole place up, and a heap o' other tales, as I know warn't no better and lies. 'Twarn't such a grit length o' time as I hear he was abiding in the metrolopolis. But some says one thing and some another, till I fare quite confoosed with such a many stories."

By this time Nanny had managed to admit the party into the hall. Coming out of the sunlight into the rooms where all the shutters were closed, she told them to wait at the door till she could open them. Pierce remembered how they fastened with a particular catch, and that it was no easy matter to undo them: knowing his way as well in the dark as in broad daylight, he had opened one window before Nanny had time to find a chair to raise herself to the bar.

"Heyday!" said the old woman," who knows their ways in the dark in this house?

I wouldn't ha thought there was a man in the village, nor out on't that could ha oped them shutters that quick. There, Sir," she said, placing the chair for More, "perhaps ye'll be good enough to ope this one too, as ye managed the t'other. It is a bootiful room when there's plenty of light in't."

As Pierce got up on the chair, he had some difficulty in hiding his lameness, which, through Nanny's extreme dimness of sight, he had as yet succeeded in concealing from her; but Nanny's attention was called away by Miss Bellerby, who asked for the explanation of some picture.

"This," said Nanny, in answer to a question put by Miss Bellerby, "was the drawing-room, and the furniture was as splendacious as ever you see once, but the people as took the last hire of the Hall pretty nigh spoilt it. That," continued the old servant, growing in importance and pomposity with the recollection of former days, "that," pointing to

one of the pictures, "is the portrait of the great Sir Thomas, Lord High Chancellor of His Majesty King Henry, and opposite him is a full-length portrait of the late Mr. More. Over the chimbley is a pictor by the family painter, Ruby, always counted by the late master for the finest piece in the elecshun. Atween the winder is a fancy portrait of Nollekums by the silibrated Shakespeare; the rest is all ancestors. The next room is the dining-room, and fudder on ye'll come to the book-room."

"What a charming old house it is," exclaimed Mary, addressing herself to Pierce. "I wonder you don't live here."

"Ay, ay," chimed in the old nurse, "that's right, mam. You'd better persuade your husband to hire it. It's as good as you'll find for a young couple, I'll lay a beet, and real good accomadashum up-stairs, and a bootiful nursery, and a heap o' rooms for all manner of family, that there is."

At this speech from their guide, Pierce burst into a hearty laugh, and Mary smiled and blushed, hardly knowing which way to look. Old Nanny again turned round sharply at the merry sound of Pierce's voice, and stopping before him raised her hands above her brows to keep off the light.

"Deer bless me!" she muttered to herself as she examined his features. "I beg your pardon, Sir, for staring at you o' this form, but you put me wonderful in mind of my young measter; but he was lame, he was, and I don't see as you're lame, are you?" she said, in a credulous tone, looking at his legs.

"Why bless me, but it never is"—

"Master Pierce, Nanny," said More, walking a few steps, and limping as he was used to.

"Measter Pierce! Measter Pierce, I do declare!" cried the old woman, toddling up to him at her best pace. "Why, deer bless me! Deer! deer! come, do let's have both your hands. Now there, to think that

I shouldn't ha' knowed ye ! To think that old Nanny as had you in her arms afore any one else in this world, shouldn't ha knowed you now ; that is wonderful ! Deer, deer, that beats all—that does. Well, well, deary me, deary me !” and Nanny being quite overcome by her feelings sat down upon a chair, and began to cry. “ And so,” said the good creature, recovering herself, after a fit of suppressed sobbing, “ and so you've come back again to see the old place, Measter Pierce, and you haven't—but, Lor', do come to the light now, and let me look at you. Why dear me, you're growing to be quite a young man, that you are. You was the handsomest babby as ever comed into this blessed world, I do believe ; and so,” said Nanny, pointing with her thumb over her shoulder, “ and so you've got married, my dear, have you ? and you're come down to live at the old place again. Well, well, to think that Nanny should ever live to see the likes

of this!" and here another flood of tears relieved the excited feelings of the old woman. "You'll go up and see the nursery, won't you, Measter Pierce? Lor', what games you did play me! there never was another like you. When I used to put you into your tub of a morning, you'd fight me, and run over the house without a single rag to—"

"Well, Nanny," interrupted Pierce, "I'll run up there by myself, and you can stop and take care of this lady and Mr. Bellerby."

"Ay, ay, he'll run up by himself, 'twud take me too long to get up there. He wouldn't wait for me I'd lay a beet. Older and wusser, older and wusser, that's how we grows."

"Older, but no worse, I hope," said Pierce; and so, leaving the attorney and his daughter in the library, with a beating heart he went up to visit the old haunts of his childhood.

His first curiosity was to see what had once been his sitting-room and school-room. It had been used for nearly the same purposes by the young gentlemen of the family who had lately tenanted the house; and when Pierce let in the light upon it, it looked very much the same as when he last saw it. The book-cases and prints, the historical and genealogical maps, hanging from the walls, were just as they had been in his time. It was easy enough, with these unchanged things about him, to fancy his queer old pedagogue sitting by his side at the table which still stood in the middle of the room, patiently correcting an exercise that his only care had been to get done as quickly as possible.

The beauty of the weather reminded him of the summer days when bees and wasps would fly in at the open window, creating a diversion of five or ten minutes, then looked upon as so much time gained; it

recalled his impatience when a difficult passage in "Homer" or "Virgil" kept him within doors, while his dogs and pony waited for him below. How well he recollected pulling out his fly-book, or sharpening his knife, or putting on the clock, or lounging over the fire the instant his tutor went out of the room; and how, as he heard him coming up the stairs, he would rush back again to his seat, and bury his head in both his hands, and frown and pore over his book, as if he was the most studious of boys. To get the morning's work over, to cheat the pedagogue with his boyish tricks, to join his mother, to mount his pony, to range the park with rod, or dogs and gun, had been in those happy by-gone days the sole cares of his existence.

How had he changed! What a mighty difference there was between the world, as he then used to look upon it, and the world as he had since found it! He could only re-

collect the freshness of his former thoughts ; he could not think them over again. How real cares and sorrows had multiplied with his experience ! Would they continue to augment in the same proportion ? If he had died then—if he had died when his mother died—and he remembered looking upon her dead face, and saying from the depth of his soul : “ Would that I were in your place, dear mother ! ”—if he had died then, he might now have been where she must be ; not as he then was with multiplied sins upon his head, and more—however hard he should fight against them—more to be accumulated. Oh ! how sincerely he had vowed, when seeing his mother for ever hidden in the tomb, that he would live a goodly life, and join her again at last ! How he had prayed to be helped in this good purpose ! and how, for long after, the memory of those vows and prayers had saved him from many a deadly sin ! Was he now so full of hopes to join

his mother at the last? He had not wanted for good resolves; he was always full of them. The copy-text, the first long word of which had in that school-room so often bothered, now recurred to him, "Procrastination is the thief of time." He had since got by memory the lines that followed them, and he repeated them half aloud.

"Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene—
If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.
Of man's miraculous mistakes this bears
The palm, 'That all men are about to live'
For ever on the brink of being born;
All pay themselves the compliment to think
They one day shall not drivel; and their pride
On this reversion takes up ready praise:
At least their own, their future selves applauds,
How excellent that life they ne'er will lead.

* . * * * *

All promise is poor, dilatory man,
And that through every stage. When young, indeed,

In full content we sometimes nobly rest
Unanxious for ourselves ; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise.
At thirty man suspects himself a fool,
Knows it at forty and reforms his plan ;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve ;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves, and re-resolves, then dies the same.' ”

“ And what’s the cure for all this ? ”
thought Pierce ; “ the constant probing of
the sore ? But will it not grow callous ?
No ! Conscience grows persuasive as we
listen to her. The fear is in her silence ;
for ‘ dangers are no more light if they once
seem light.’ These little incidents, for aught
we know, may have some great design and
end. But they wait for me below ! ”

So hurrying from this room, he passed on
to one that had been his mother’s sitting-
room. Long-forgotten scenes started up,
and shaking off the burden of past years,
welcomed the spirit that unlocked their rusty

fetters, and leapt into his heart with all the freshness of their birth-day. There remained the table now unclothed, ungarnished, at which, standing upon a footstool to be level with its height, he had followed the pointings of his mother's finger over the picture of the spelling-book; there the cupboard, where lodged the store of winter clothing for the poor—where, hidden for glad surprise, his playthings lay, and whence, on choice occasions, the sugar-plum or “goody” box was drawn to reward—forsooth obedience.

Obedience! If that mother were now alive, how could obedience reward her love! The sugar-plum had been a reward for goodness to himself, not to her. What she exacted was for his good, not her's. All motive with her was love. He could not show or tell her now how much he owed, how much he loved her. She was no longer in that room, and never, never would be more.

He passed on, and stood in a sort of gloomy gallery—along its walls were hung a score or more of ancestors. Here a noted soldier, there a lawyer, a sportsman, a burly, sleek-faced justice. It was a proud thought to see his forefathers so well to do—himself the heir of so much gentility. Then the women, some with sweet innocent faces, some prude, some in attitudes, and one beautiful slim form dressed gracefully in white, who had six fingers, and was said to haunt the house. He had an affection even for this romantic ghost. Again he paused before another portrait, and as he gazed upon the face, he shuddered and sighed.

“Surely,” he exclaimed, “there must, in those days, have been some kindred blood between us! This girl’s features bear all the character of *your’s*—that strange comingling of pride and meekness—of pride to man and meekness to God. Yet pride is not the word, but a look of something

more pure, more lofty than pride, before which mere pride shrinks to shame. Oh, Eda! I look upon these forms dressed in the garb of centuries gone by! Once they, as I, looked back upon the past, and now themselves are forgotten with the past. Even I, the only remnant of their race, know not their forgotten names. All the members of my own generation—faces I used to think inseparable from these chambers—are now as far removed as they; none but an old and grave-stamped servant is left to own and recognize me. Very shortly shall my name be remembered only on the tomb as theirs are. What matters it then that you will never share my thoughts, my feelings? A few years and both of us will have passed away.

Were you with me—what sweetness is in the thought!—were you here, I still should be reminded such happiness was but transient, I still would feel, and bid you share

the feeling, that, only as the offspring and reflection of an infinite love could our love survive ; that by these signs of nothingness, all that is earthly must perish as they have perished — must be as mine now is — as though it had not been.”

Miss Bellerby was calling him, and he went down to join them.

“ Well, Measter Pierce,” said old Nanny, rising respectfully as More joined the party in the library, “ there ain’t no grit change in the old rooms, is there? I was hopeful that the nursery would come handy agin. But these gentlefolks tells me you’re only a single man arter all. Ah! I thought Nanny ’ud never live to see the day when the rightful owner kep the place alive! What’s the use of letting Moreton Hall to them as don’t care for nobody about it? They’re nought but Brummajums at best; and I never see no good in any of the pele-

bians as long as I bin about, not I !” sobbed the offended dame.

“ Never mind, Nanny,” said Pierce. “ The house will never be sold as long as you or I live ; and when I can afford it, I’ll come and live here myself, and you shall see that they treat me properly.”

“ As soon as you can afford it !” said the old woman, shaking her stick at him. “ You ought to ha been married and settled long enough ago, instead of gallywanting and rendewooing all about the country as you do. But come, if you’ve seen enough of the house, I can give the lady a glass of cowslip wine. You wouldn’t turn your nose up at it yourself once.”

With this invitation, the party followed Nanny to her cottage. Pierce turned several times to take a parting look at the Hall. He wondered if he should ever enter its walls again, and if ever, when, and under

what circumstances. Again he thought—and a deep-drawn sigh escaped him as he thought—of Lady Eda; undesignedly his fancy drew her brightening with her presence those sombre rooms, and the now neglected garden teeming with flowers, whose sweet odours would send forth their incense at her approach. Then Mona Castle came back to him, and all the events that had happened there—their rise, their progress, and their end.

Miss Bellerby spoke to him, so he was obliged to pay attention to her.

“What a charming cottage!” she said; “so neat and clean!”

“I beg your pardon!”

“Ah! I see you are in the clouds, or rather inside the old Hall; but I don’t wonder at it! I was saying how nice Nanny’s cottage looks.”

Indeed it did look the picture of comfort and cleanliness. It stood a little

way from the stables, and was attached to the now deserted poultry-house. The cottage was almost entirely hidden by ivy and other creepers. The garden was kept with the greatest neatness, and well stocked with almost every variety of vegetable. Inside, the rows of shining pewter, the chimney ornaments, consisting of choice pieces of crockery, and a set of fire-irons suspended above them, none of which were ever taken down except to be cleaned, the beautifully-polished oven and grate, the whitened hearth, and the sleepy indifference of the cat and dog who lay upon it, all bespoke the easy circumstances which Pierce's liberality had conferred on the old and faithful servant of his family.

Nanny bustled about in due acknowledgment of such a visit. She dusted every chair with careful attention before placing them for the reception of her guests. Three wine glasses were washed and set upon a

tray; and a fat black bottle being produced from the cupboard, she poured out and handed round the golden fluid with a grace that would have done credit to a younger Ganymede.

“What do you think of that, Miss?” asked the old dame, waiting till the young lady had tasted it.

“I think it very good indeed, and should like very much to have the receipt of it; for you know, Nanny, I am papa’s housekeeper, and keep a book full of receipts, and if you will give me the receipt for making your cowslip wine, I dare say I can give you one you haven’t got in exchange.”

“For the matter of that,” said Nanny, filling the glasses a second time and setting a plate full of cakes on the table, “ye shall have the recipe in welcome. But an’ I thought the cooslip wine pleased ye, and wad bring ye over here, I’d not part with the recipe at all.”

“That’s a very pretty speech, Nanny,”

replied Miss Bellerby, "and we should ill show our gratitude for it if we accepted your kindness, and never came to thank you. I am sure I think the drive so pretty and Moreton so delightful, that if it depended on me, Nanny, I should come over here very often in the summer time."

"Well, well, there's no saying; there's many unlikely things as comes to pass, not but what it's likely enough too." And here she gave a very knowing look at Pierce. "Ye might easy ride over to see the place again, and mayhap ye'd be for stopping here, too. There's as good beds in the Hall as there be at ——, I'd lay a beet." And the old woman chuckled and chuckled till she brought on a violent fit of coughing.

"Don't you think, Sir," said Mr. Bellerby, turning to Pierce, "we had better be starting? We shall hardly get back as it is before dark, and the roads are very bad, as we approach ——."

“Whenever you please, Mr. Bellerby ; I am quite ready.”

“My son is in the stables, I dare say,” said Nanny ; and going to the door she shouted out in a cracked voice, which would have been perfectly audible at twice the distance the stables stood from her cottage. She was answered by her son, whom she desired to put the horses into Mr. Bellerby’s carriage as quickly as possible. The vehicle was soon brought round, and the trio took an affectionate leave of Nanny ; not, however, before she had insisted on giving her young master a maternal hug, and had made several inuendoes relative to the attractions of Miss Bellerby, and the duties Pierce owed to the place to get married with as little loss of time as was convenient. These remarks naturally created a momentary awkwardness with Pierce, and, as he thought, had the very unpleasant effect of making Miss Bellerby a trifle more reserved than usual, in the course

of their drive home. Reserve of any kind was, however, so foreign to Mary's nature, that she soon forgot Nanny's insinuations, and before the evening was over had resumed that childlike simplicity, the freshness of which, according to Pierce's ideas, formed one of the principal charms in her character.

CHAPTER XI.

THE visit to Moreton, notwithstanding the pleasant auspices under which it had been made, gave rather a melancholy turn to Pierce's conversation. Mary readily sympathised with him, and endeavoured to cheer him with the prospect of a future visit to the old Hall.

"Why," said she, "should you not come down here again, and make another excursion over to Moreton? I am sure papa will always be delighted to see you whenever you like to come."

“And you,” said Pierce, “will lend us your horse to put in harness?”

“Yes, to be sure, as often as you like.”

“I am afraid,” said Pierce, “even that good-natured offer won’t bring me down. No, I don’t think it very likely that I shall see Moreton again for many a long day.”

“Why not? What is to prevent you?”

“A hundred things. I must live in London. The fact is, Miss Bellerby, between ourselves, I am not quite so well off as I was once. Young men sometimes have a foolish propensity to get rid of their money; and I, like a donkey, squandered mine before I really knew the value of it. And now you see I have had my dance, and so I must pay the piper.”

“Well, but you are not so poor that you cannot afford to come down here by the railroad sometimes.”

“It isn’t the expense of the journey, but the loss of the time and the breaking through

good habits. It is useless to make a face over it. If I must put my neck into the collar, I may as well do it with a good grace as a bad one. As Adam says :

“ ‘ With labour I must earn
My bread—what harm ? Idleness had been worse :
My labour will sustain me.’ ”

I shall have to live in London instead of in the country, and I shall have to work instead of being idle, that's all.”

“ It sounds as if there was not much difference in the way you put it ; but I think it would make me ill and unhappy to live in London all the year round, and never to see the green fields and trees, and the beautiful country.”

More smiled.

“ I don't doubt for an instant that it would make you ill never to breathe the fresh air ; and I dare say it would kill you if you had to work all the while for your bread. But

what might kill you would perhaps not make me ill. I am used to some hardships, though not to poverty, and maybe I have undergone other trials which you are not likely ever to become acquainted with."

Mary sighed and doubted the truth of this assertion, though she did not deny it.

"It astonishes me," she said, "to think how you can possibly have made yourself so very poor, as actually to be in need of working for your bread."

"Working for my bread? Not exactly that; but still I shall have to work, because I should like, if I could, to have some luxuries beyond my bread alone. As to the ways and means by which this undesirable consummation has been effected, I do not deserve the full credit for them. I don't mean to say I am not to blame, far from it; yet, as is generally the case in such things, I had a kind friend who helped me off with a tolerable share of my fortune, and

helped me on with a proportionate share of my misfortune."

"And was he an intimate friend?"

"Oh, remarkably so; I never knew a man better, at least, than I know him now."

"But what a horrid creature he must have been. You surely don't mean to say you trusted him with some of your money, and that he never paid you back again?"

"Yes, but I do," said Pierce, laughingly; "I thought him an honourable man, and I discovered him to be the biggest rogue unhung. I did not even lend him the money. I gave him—not that you will understand what it is—I gave a power enabling him to transfer about £12,000 of mine from the Bank of England, commonly called 'The Funds,' to my private banker. Instead of transferring the money to my banker, he put it into his own pocket and departed without wishing me good-bye; and, for anything I

know to the contrary, is now on the way to America or Australia."

"Goodness me, what a wretch!"

"Oh!" continued Pierce, "if he had never injured anybody in the world but me, I might have forgiven him; but there are others living, or rather dying, who have suffered more than I have from his villainous treachery."

"In what way have they suffered?" asked Mary.

"Why, in all sorts of ways. There is one poor creature who has twice written to me—and I am worse than a savage for not having gone to her—to say she is dying, partly through his treatment of her, and partly from sheer starvation. If any one in the world ought to have cared for her, he ought."

"I never heard of such a wretch! I am sure I hope you will never see him again."

"I hope not, with all my heart; though, if I knew where he was at this moment, I

think I might be inclined to pay him a visit, if it was only to save him the trouble of spending my £12,000."

"And have you no clue to his steps?" asked Mary. "Such a wicked wretch ought not to escape. He will serve somebody else as he has served you."

"To be sure he will if he has a chance, and he certainly may for all I can do to stop him. However, I should not be surprised to hear that he had ended his days on the gallows."

"And what has become of his poor wife, whom you say he has starved to death?"

"*His wife!*" exclaimed Pierce, "she will die, I suppose, unless I get back to see her in time to procure some good medical advice. I ought to have been in London a week ago if my illness had not kept me tied down here."

"It was unfortunate, certainly," said Mary, rather sadly.

“No, I won’t say that, at least as far as I am concerned, it was well worth being ill for the luxury of having so kind a nurse. If I had been moping all that time in London without a soul caring a sixpence whether I lived or died, I probably should have died out of pure vexation of spirit ; instead of which I have spent a most delightful ten days, at a time when, with the loss of my fortune and some other disagreeable accidents I most particularly needed such cheerful society as yours. No,” said Pierce, affectionately taking her hand ; “ it’s not every day of one’s life that scatterlings like myself are refreshed with the sight of such kind-hearted creatures as Miss Bellerby. Believe me the combination of true benevolence, with a disposition bold enough to exercise it, is not so common an occurrence as to be forgotten directly it is met with. I shall leave this to-morrow or the next day, probably, as I said before, not to pay you another visit for a

very long time to come ; but do not suppose that in any interval of time I shall forget either Mossbank or its inhabitants. I remember somebody says ‘mankind are always happier for having been happy ;’ if this be true, and I believe it is partly so, it must be a pleasure to me whenever I remember this bright little fortnight breaking into one of the gloomiest periods of my lifetime. But now I think you must be tired. I see your father has been labouring in the most painful way to keep his eyes open for the last three quarters of an hour, so I will release you from the confessor’s box, where you have been locked in, to listen to my egotistical yarns, till you must be quite out of patience with me.”

Mary rose to wish her father good-night. She made no answer to Pierce’s last speech, and if the truth be told she did not at all like his saying she must be tired with listening to his “egotistical yarns ;” for it was not

true ; and he might have known, if he had had any penetration at all, that she took very great interest in everything he told her about himself ; she thought besides that it did him a great deal of good to unburden his mind to her, only he was so foolish he couldn't the least see anything. It was quite provoking !

Some time after Mary went to bed she puzzled and puzzled to think what "other disagreeable accidents" he could have alluded to as making that particular time "the most gloomy period of his life." He seemed to talk of the treachery of his friend with perfect calmness ; it was not this that made him so melancholy. She could not conceive what it could be, unless—and that, of course, must be the reason—he had been crossed in love ! Poor fellow ! He spoke too of living obscurely and plodding away for his bread, and living entirely out of society. It was a very romantic case, indeed. In fact there was a

mystery about his character altogether : and as she fell asleep she thought how provoking it was he could not stop at Mossbank another ten days that she might have made out a good deal more about him.

The next day was occupied by Pierce in signing documents which, for the life of him he did not understand a line of, and in receiving from Mr. Bellerby bills for certain sums advanced by the attorney on his estate. Mr. Bellerby explained to him the nature of the transaction, but so involved was this explanation in legal phrases—so incomprehensible was the whole matter of “the conveyance of land in pledge for, or in satisfaction of a debt or obligation, with the reserved powers of recovery on payment or performance &c.,” so bewildered was he by the frequent use of such terms as “the legal reversion,” “the disencumbrance of the adjudication,” and everything connected with the mortgage, that had he been asked, he

would have signed any paper the attorney might have thought proper to place in his hands. All he cared to know was, that he should possess a clear income of £300 per annum, and that the house was not to be sold with the estate.

The sum thus secured exceeded his expectations. He conjectured that the violent outbreak he had given vent to the day before their trip to Moreton, had had a salutary effect upon Mr. Bellerby's conscience. He trusted to this avowal of his suspicions as the surest indication to the attorney that he, Pierce More, was not a man to be taken in with his eyes blindfolded; that he was on the alert for anything approaching to dishonourable dealings; and that, with all his ignorance of business matters, experience had sharpened him into a man of the world. Impressed with such notions of his own sagacity, and of the security it afforded him, he was placed in a position singularly

exposed to the fraudulent devices of the crafty lawyer. Whether or not Mr. Bellerby availed himself of this favourable opportunity of improving his own fortunes, will better appear in a later chapter of our story.

CHAPTER XII.

PIERCE had spent the whole morning in the attorney's office. Be it remembered that the entrance, and therefore the exit to this sanctum sanctorum, or rather this "latibulum locorum occultorum" lay through the adjacent apartment allotted to the industrious Mobbs. When Pierce, having pocketed his bills, turned to leave Mr. Bellerby, he opened the door so suddenly in his anxiety to quit the parchmenty atmosphere, that the ubiquitous little clerk, who as usual had his ear at the keyhole,

was rammed against the wall before he had time to retreat.

"I beg your pardon," said More, with difficulty suppressing a laugh at the mingled expression of alarm and pain in the crushed little scrivener's face, "I beg your pardon; were you going in to see Mr. Bellerby?"

"Not at all, not at all, Sir," whimpered Mobbs, brightening up at this fortunate release from the horns of his dilemma, "I happened to—ahem—to have dropped my pen."

"Well, I hope you are not hurt," said Pierce.

"Not in the least, Sir, oh, no!—ahem—beautiful weather, Sir."

"Yes, it is," replied Pierce, struck with the incongruity of the remark.

Mobbs took courage from the complacent manner of Pierce's answer.

"Ahem," he coughed, and dropped from

his lofty perch, whither he had mounted on his escape from the door, "ahem. Going away to-morrow, Sir, I believe."

"Who? you?" said Pierce.

"No, Sir, you," and Mobbs pointed at him with the sharp ends of the iron compasses.

"Yes, I believe I am."

"Going to town, Sir?"

"Yes."

"Nice place, London, Sir; pleasant change."

"Not much change to me," said Pierce, "I generally live there."

"Indeed, Sir; pleasant change being in the country, Sir, perhaps?"

"Yes, it is."

"T'other way on with me, Sir," said Mobbs, growing bolder, and hopping back on to the stool: "wish I was going to London."

"Why?" inquired Pierce, "don't you like this place?"

Mobbs shook a cloud of dust from his wig in reply.

“Grinding work this, Sir—eight hours a day, five-and-twenty shillings a week, eleven children and a baby.”

Pierce surveyed with astonishment the diminutive patriarch, and said :

“And how on earth do you manage to feed and clothe twelve children on five-and-twenty shillings a week?”

“It’s a hard matter, Sir, I do assure you. But life is hard to one man and soft to another. It’s all smooth for some and all ups and downs for others, as my old grandmother used to say, who had gone on crutches all her life.”

“Yes,” said Pierce, musingly, “there’s no accounting for the freaks of fortune. Perhaps you may be better off some day. A man is rich to-day and a beggar to-morrow. A lucky cast may win a heavy stake.”

“Very true, Sir, very true. The casts

haven't been the right way for me yet, though. I ought to have been a rich man, but I aint."

"How's that?"

"My father was well off—had a neat business in the grocery line, Sir—married respectable young woman—one month after marriage ate raw carrot—stuck in his throat—had only just time to make his will—was very partial to his nephew—a serious oversight—forgot me, and died, leaving the connection, property, and 'plant' to my cousin."

"The plant!" said Pierce in amazement.

"What, the carrot he died of?"

"No, Sir, no—technical term for fixtures."

"That was very unfortunate. You came into the world rather too late."

"*Unde derivatur* Posthumus—my name, Sir," added Mobbs, in explanation.

"I see," said Pierce, "your education

was not neglected. You have not forgotten your Latin."

"My father began life as a schoolmaster, Sir, and then the long training of my own scholastic life, Sir," said Posthumus, looking dignified. "We gentlemen of the law get a considerable smattering of the classics. It is essentially a learned profession, Sir. *Multis rebus inest magnitudo*, and so on."

"And Mrs. Posthumus?"

"Mobbs, if you please, Sir," interposed the clerk.

"And Mrs. Posthumus Mobbs?"

"Elizabeth Mobbs, if you please," suggested the other.

"Your wife, I mean," said Pierce. "I suppose she had some little property of her own, had she not?"

"She ought to have had, Sir; but circumstances—circumstances there again were unfavourable."

“How was that?” inquired More.

“Very unfavourable circumstances,” replied the little man, mysteriously shaking his head.

“A secret, I suppose?” said Pierce, motioning with his hand, as if to show his disinclination to pry into the family affairs of the little scrivener.

“Not at all, Sir. Mrs. Mobbs’ father was a baker, Sir—did an excellent stroke—supplied half the town, Sir, pretty nearly. The daughter, Sir, was a lovely female, a superior young woman. I never passed by the shop without popping in to buy a bun, and have a word with Elizabeth. Met with great encouragement, but, like the course of every true love, Sir, there was a baker’s boy that puddled the stream by putting his foot in it. He ruined the baker, and the baker’s daughter, and naturally in consequence the baker’s daughter’s husband. Bother that baker’s boy!” apostrophized Mr. Mobbs, plunging

the compasses into a bit of india-rubber. "He wanted Elizabeth, and Elizabeth didn't want him. He swore he would marry her, and she swore—no, she didn't swear, but she as good as swore—that she would have me. The baker's boy, Sir, was a villain, and he had his revenge. I married the young woman, and had, I may say, most excellent prospects. Well, Sir, I hadn't been married a week, Sir, before a circumstance happened that floored the whole concern. The baker lost his custom, flared up with his capital, died broken-hearted, and left his daughter without a sixpence."

"And what," gravely inquired Pierce, "had your rival, the baker's boy, to do with this?"

"Why, I'll tell you, Sir. Mrs. Mobbs' father wore a wig, as many gentlemen do, Sir," (here he adjusted his own,) "and the baker's boy—no, stop a bit; I must begin at the other end. One of Mrs. Mobbs'

father's customers was rather a particular old lady, and had a good deal of influence in the town because she had so much to say ; one morning she caught the baker's boy gossiping with her cook, and out of spite for this she watched for an excuse to change her baker, so that the young man shouldn't come there any more. At last, what paltry plea do you think the old woman made use of? she declared the bread wasn't nice, and said she had found a lock of hair in it ; when it's a well known fact the baker was as bald as a marble. Howsoever, she told the young man if ever she had any fault of that kind to find again she should change her baker at once. Now, Sir, this trifling circumstance just put into that young rascal's head the very piece of mischief which did all the damage. He goes home, gets hold of the baker's wig at night, cuts it into fifty pieces, and when he makes the bread next morning, puts a bit of the wig into

each of the loaves, and has 'em baked and sent all over the town. There was an end to that business. The baker never sold a twopenny loaf afterwards. It was no use punishing the lad; so Mrs. Mobbs' father took to drinking, and swallowed his capital in no time, and when he died we didn't get a ha'penny, Sir—not a ha'penny."

"It was very unfortunate," said Pierce, amused at the singularity of the accident which had ruined the prospects of the little man; "but still, as I said before, you may have a lucky turn some day. You don't seem to have very hard work to do!"

"You are mistaken about that, Sir," answered Mobbs, casting a fidgetty glance at the attorney's door. "There's plenty of work to do sometimes; though *sometimes* Mr. Bellerby has work he trusts to nobody's hands but his own."

"Such, then, is the case at the present moment?"

Mobbs winked and nodded simultaneously.

“And do you know,” said Pierce, “what it is Mr. Bellerby is engaged about at the present moment?”

“I, Sir? Bless me! how should I know?”

“Ah!” thought Pierce, “he little guesses that I am a ruined man then. And when,” he added aloud, “when there is a great deal of work to be done, I suppose Mr. Bellerby has some one into the office to help you?”

Now this was the very point Mobbs had wanted to speak on when he first detained Pierce on his way out.

“Not now, Sir,” he replied. “Some time back Mr. Bellerby kept another clerk. I could tell you something about him, Sir, if I dared.” And here Mobbs pointed at the inner door.

Pierce understood by this sign that what

Mobbs could tell, he did not like to tell, either in consideration of, or out of fear for, Mr. Bellerby. If the communications were such as Mr. Bellerby would not have permitted him to hear, he would not, on any account, have listened to them.

"Pray don't tell me any secrets," said Pierce, "which do not concern me. I would rather not hear them."

"But," whispered Mobbs, laying his forefinger on the cuff of More's coat, "they do concern you."

"How?" said Pierce, suddenly struck with the look of anxiety in the clerk's face.

"You, Mr. More, were the cause of that man's losing his place."

"What man?" said Pierce, in astonishment.

"Mr. Bellerby's late clerk," returned the other.

"I? Nonsense! I never saw Mr. Bel-

lerby's clerk in my life. It is fifteen years at least since I was at Mossbank."

"But the master has had business of yours to do since that time," whispered the clerk.

"Ay, and what of that?"

"Why, Sir, his clerk and he differed in opinion as to the best mode of conducting that business."

"And I suppose Mr. Bellerby kicked him out of the office because he had the impudence to interfere?"

"No, he left of his own accord."

"What a high-minded individual!" said Pierce, with a sneer.

"He was a high-minded individual," said Mobbs, emphatically; "and you will believe it too when you know what he suffered on your account."

"Suffered on my account!" ejaculated the other. "What the deuce do you mean?"

"Not so loud, Sir, if you please," said

Mobbs, who was now alarmed at the vehemence he had so quickly roused. "If we were overheard, the old man would be the death of me."

"Pshaw!" said More, impatiently, looking upon Mobbs as a gossiping little fool, who really had nothing of importance to tell, and had kept him twaddling all the time for company's sake. "What is it, man? If it concerns me, let's hear what it is!"

But Mobbs saw how closely he had been on the verge of making a dangerous disclosure; which, considering the disposition of the party concerned, must certainly have ended in an open rupture between More and the attorney. He determined, therefore, to say no more about it, but prepared to turn the matter off by assuming the character he had wit enough to see Pierce imputed to him.

"Why," said Mobbs, confidentially lowering his voice, "this clerk, when he heard you were a client of Mr. Bellerby, told the

old gentleman one day, in a huff, that he was sure he wanted to get you down here to marry his daughter, and if he knew where you lived, he would put you on your guard against such a shameful plot. Consequence was, Mr. Bellerby turned very indignant, and called the clerk a scoundrel. Mr. Taylor was a proud man, had been a gentleman; so he left the place, and has never been heard of since."

"Tush!" said More, whose patience had barely endured this fabrication to the end. "If that's what you call suffering on my account, I can't say I feel under very deep obligation to him. Good morning, Mr. Mobbs. I hope you will soon have some one to help you in your duties, who better understands his own, than the quondam gentleman who has deserted you on my account."

So saying, Pierce left little Mobbs to congratulate himself on having escaped a diffi-

culty which his prying and incautious nature had nearly brought him into.

It is not unlikely the reader may think Mr. Pierce More a person of remarkably dull comprehension, or that he was altogether deficient in the organ of constructiveness, inasmuch as he sees him in possession of certain data, and having a knowledge of certain facts intimately connected with other facts, yet at present perfectly unsuspecting of any existing relation between them, and totally unable to detect that easy connection which has long been so evident to himself.

With all deference, however, we think, when it is remembered how slight a resemblance the foolish-sounding tale just related by Mobbs bore to the long and serious history of the beggar's misfortunes — how simple in themselves were both accounts, and how easily they might have been true in a thousand cases — how unlikely it was that,

even in recalling the beggar's story, he should ever, for an instant, imagine that this man's woes had originated from the same causes as his own—how, knowing Winter as he did personally and by reputation as a man of fashion, brought up at college, and having spent his life in London, not to mention the careful ignorance he had feigned of his father's partner—how little ground there was for identifying him with the sleeping partner of an attorney whose clerk the beggar had been, or with the seducer of Taylor's wife; or again to recognise Mr. Bellerby as that attorney, Mobbs' fellow-clerk as Taylor, and the dying woman in London as the wife of Taylor—

When it is remembered how improbable the connection of all these events would appear to any one who had not watched their progress from the beginning, to any one who had not a bird's-eye view of the labyrinth, and could trace the unimpeded path

at a glance without the endless obstructions of an opaque wall, we cannot help thinking that Pierce's ignorance of what is so palpable to the reader would be natural in any case ; and more so in his, since Pierce's thoughts were almost always running between Mona and his ruin, and never looking out for the discovery which was about to burst upon him.

It is just probable Pierce might have continued in his present state of ignorance for years, had not an accident which occurred that evening, thrown a light upon this skein of events, enabling him to unravel it the instant he obtained the single clue.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was the last evening he had to spend at Mossbank. Mr. Bellerby was more than usually complacent and obliging. Mary could not help showing how sorry she was to lose so engaging a companion. Very much the same sort of feeling depressed his spirits; and the fact of observing that Mary did feel sorry because he was going, made him look upon his departure with considerable regret.

Mary was habitually so cheerful that her silence this evening was very marked. More

was almost surprised to see how serious she could be ; and, in consequence, she appeared to him more interesting than he had hitherto thought her. Once or twice he caught himself saying things to her which he blushed to think of when he was reminded of Lady Eda ; and then, if Mary should mistake them for anything but the expression of feelings of the moment, he would be much to blame for making use of such unguarded language. When this occurred to him, he took care to season his remarks with frequent allusions to his future prospects. At these times Mr. Bellerby always pricked up his ears to listen, and sometimes take part in the conversation.

The attorney did not fail to press his hospitality upon Pierce, assuring him a hearty welcome would await his visits to Mossbank, as frequently as he pleased to make them. To all these invitations Pierce replied in the most positive terms, that however agreeable

such visits might be—and he knew nothing that would give him greater pleasure—he had resolved to live continually in London, where he hoped to engage in some profession which would keep him in constant occupation.

More did not see the frown on the attorney's brow, when he thus declared his intention not to revisit Mossbank. Mr. Bellerby asked him what profession he thought of entering upon. Pierce replied he had not finally made up his mind, but he had been thinking of the Bar, not by any means as the speediest road to regain his lost fortunes, but because it best suited his tastes and inclinations. Mr. Bellerby pointed out the enormous difficulties obstructing the paths of success in that noble profession, the long and laborious course of study, and the great uncertainty in the end. Pierce said he had duly considered all these obstacles, but if every man was to be defeated by the first difficulties he encountered, there was no calling in life in which he could

ever succeed. There were prizes to be drawn, and some one must draw them ; why not he as well as another? Mr. Bellerby did not know ; it might be he would succeed, but unless a man had been trained to habits of industry and perseverance—he meant no disparagement to Mr. More—he thought the Bar the worst profession a man could choose. Then, asked Pierce, what would he have him try, surely not idleness? He was too old for Army or Navy, and had he not been, he was unfit for either ; the Church was out of the question, he could not subscribe to the articles. There was no choice ; business was as little suited to him as he to it ; besides, it was but a species of gambling, and he knew of nothing that had so pernicious an effect upon the mind as the constant application of all the faculties to the pursuit of money. Mr. Bellerby secretly sneered, and answered that the choice of professions was indeed very limited to a gentleman in More's station of

life. Perhaps, on the whole, the Bar was the best, though there was one difficulty Mr. More would do well to consider: this was the immense disadvantage he would necessarily meet with in the present day, in having to contend with gentlemen connected with the other branches of the legal profession. Indeed, Pierce had not thought of this, though he remembered to have heard how many attorneys or their sons were now entering the profession, and doubtless they would get many clients, owing to the connection.

“It was well known,” said Mr. Bellerby, “that a young man with sufficient talents, and plenty of application, might, with such a connection, make his way at the Bar, and indeed, ensure a large amount of business in the lapse of a very few years.”

Pierce either would not or could not see the drift of Mr. Bellerby’s remarks. He answered with simplicity that the difficulty Mr. Bellerby had suggested would evidently

be a disadvantage, but he should have to make up his mind to face this as well as others. Thank Heaven, he had enough to keep him tolerably comfortable, even should he fail in his profession.

Miss Bellerby, who had attentively listened to the conversation between Pierce and her father, was vastly relieved at its innocent termination. Of course she saw, as every woman of tact would have seen, whither the conversation tended. We omit to describe what passed through her mind the while ; a lady reader will at once understand the delicacy of feelings to which no delicacy of description can do justice. On one hand the conversation was clearly not devoid of interest, on the other, she must have felt no small repugnance to hear her father urging his design with so little attempt at concealment.

Immediately she perceived the direction his purpose had taken, she rose to go to the piano, or to look over her music. She did

not like to interrupt them by playing, and therefore could not avoid overhearing nearly all they said.

It was when her father had done speaking, and Pierce came to join her at the instrument, that the incident we before alluded to, came to pass.

“What will you try?” said Pierce, seating himself before the instrument, and running his fingers over the keys.

“I don’t know, I am sure,” she answered: “anything you like, only I would much rather hear you sing something.”

“And I would much rather listen to you; and as I am selfish, and you are not, you will sing, and let me accompany you.”

“Very well, as you please,” said Mary.

“Let me choose a song,” said Pierce, as he looked at the music Mary was turning over. “Ah, there’s one, that will do; it is as old as the hills, but that doesn’t signify. Stop, you’ve passed it over.”

"Which was it?" said Mary, looking slightly confused, and hurriedly turning over several songs at once.

"Stop, stop, it's a long way back," and Pierce took the book from her hands. "Here it is."

As he spoke Mary said: "No, not that one, not that."

But Pierce did not hear her, for his eyes were fixed on some writing on the cover page. He knew the hand, the words were "Mary Bellerby, from Gerard Winter." He read them twice aloud. Mary was silent.

"From Gerard Winter!" exclaimed More, with an accent of surprise; "do you know Gerard Winter, Miss Bellerby?"

"I knew him once," she replied, changing colour as she spoke. "He was—that is, his father was—a partner of my father's. Mr. Winter was brought up here."

"A partner of your father's! Brought up

here ! Impossible ! Yet this is written in his own hand."

"Do you know him?" asked Miss Bellerby, timidly.

For an instant Pierce made no reply. The truth had flashed upon his mind : Bellerby and Winter, the partners, were the joint plotters of his ruin. Taylor's story, Mobbs's hints, all recurred to him, all cleared up in a moment. Heavens ! how was it possible to have escaped ruin ? He shuddered when he remembered where he was ; even now some fresh mine might be ready to explode beneath him ; all connected with such a house, must be complicated in the villainy of its owners.

While reviewing in his mind the conduct of the father, and the guilt of his partner's son, More forgot the kindness of Miss Bellerby, and the daily increasing respect with which he had regarded her. For the moment, he doubted whether she too, was not in some way leagued with the rest of the family, in

accomplishing his ruin. He had heard her question. He hardly dared look up to make a reply, fearing lest he should detect in her face some sign of the guilt he so wrongfully suspected her of.

“I knew him once,” he answered gravely.

Miss Bellerby was very pale, and More observed that the hand in which she held the music slightly trembled. Her confusion confirmed his suspicion. How little did he suspect the true cause of that confusion. But Error, like a foul weed when rooted, soon overgrows and chokes the tender plants of Truth.

“Yes,” he said, stung with the bitter feeling that he had been again deceived, “I knew him once, and I know him now. Gerard Winter was the friend I told you of: he ruined me, and is a robber. Gerard Winter was he of whom I spoke as the hard-hearted murderer of yonder dying woman. Her husband assumed the name of Taylor,

your father's clerk. That clerk is now an outcast, a beggar; Winter is the man who made him so. Gerard Winter and your father——”

“Couple not their names,” said Miss Bellerby, suddenly interrupting him. “If what you have told me of Gerard Winter be true, he is a greater—he is worse than I thought he was. My father——” she could hardly speak.

“Your father,” said Pierce, “is more nearly connected with such a villain than becomes an honourable man.”

“Mr. More, what mean you?” said Miss Bellerby, assuming a dignity of tone and manner which alone prevented her giving way to the violent emotions that threatened to overpower her.

“I mean,” he replied, “what perhaps needs no explanation, that to this connection I owe my ruin.”

“Sir,” said Mary, indignantly, “your in-

situations are beyond my understanding. If you mean to insult me personally, I forgive you ; if your words injuriously regard my father, know he is as little worthy of your imputations, as he is in want of his daughter's voice to silence them."

With these words Miss Bellerby left the room.

"It is not possible," mused Pierce, when the door closed behind her, and he was left alone, "it is not possible : this high-spirited girl can never be aware of her father's roguery—she cannot know what a pilfering, miserly scoundrel he is. I must have misinterpreted her manner when I first mentioned Winter's name. Her confusion staggered me, but with what dignity she answered me at last. This could not be acting : no, no, Mary, I wronged you—you are innocent—you are not one of them—your kindness to me was not pretended kindness. Why should I forget that, and suspect you now ?"

Then he remembered how Taylor had spoken of her; how he had called her an "angel of light," and his "kind benefactress;" and, with a pleasing conviction that she was the good and innocent creature he had before thought her, there came a strong desire to make immediate reparation for the injury he had done her. But how was this to be effected? He could not unsay what he had said concerning her father; besides, he believed that with regard to Mr. Bellerby he had really spoken the truth. No apology could atone for the insinuations he had cast upon her father's honour, and the difficulty of regaining her good opinion; of obtaining her forgiveness, and of showing he was not, as he had appeared to be, utterly ungrateful for the hospitality of Mossbank, and the sympathy Mary had so constantly afforded him, made him a thousand times more anxious for the reconciliation.

In this frame of mind he was informed

by Mr. Bellerby, who entered the room for the purpose, that the gig was at the door ready to convey him to the railroad station. Mr. Bellerby poured forth a flood of regrets that More's visit had come to an end, and made a number of very polite speeches, all of which, Pierce felt sure, were coupled, like the Errate's blessings to the Busné, with a tantamount number of inward curses.

When Mr. Bellerby had expended the first vigour of his insincerity, Pierce asked permission to have five minutes' conversation with Mary before he took leave of Mossbank. The request startled the attorney, but it was evident to Pierce he received it with unexpected delight. Mr. Bellerby had no doubt his daughter would be very sorry if Mr. More went away without wishing her good-bye: he would let her know directly. The five minutes expired before the attorney came

back. The displeasure in his countenance marked the ill-success of his embassy.

“Well, Sir,” said Pierce, “will Miss Bellerby grant the favour I ask?”

“My daughter, Sir,” stammered the attorney, “is not very well this morning. She desired me to make her excuses and say how excessively annoyed she is, not to be able to leave her room. I am sure I don’t know what’s the matter with her ; but young ladies will be rather whimsical at times, Sir. Between ourselves,” said Mr. Bellerby, in a whisper, “Mary is rather delicate, that is—a little nervous—silly creature!—takes odd fancies. You see, parting with friends is sometimes too much for weak nerves—you know what women are, Sir. Well, well, Mary is one of the best of them, though I say it who perhaps should not. Yes, Sir, she’s a child any father might be proud of,

and a woman that will make any man happy who is lucky enough to win her.

“I am sure of it,” said Pierce, extricating his hand from the bony fingers of the old man, “I am sure you ought to be proud of your daughter, Mr. Bellerby; and as to her kindness, I am only sorry she has denied me an opportunity of expressing my gratitude for the share of it I have met with during my short visit under your roof. I beg of you to convey to her my sincere regret at being obliged to leave without a parting word. But I must be off; and don’t forget to deliver my message.”

“I will be sure to tell her, Sir; and remember, Sir, whenever you feel disposed to honour us with a visit—and anything in the way of business, Mr. More—”

“Thank you,” answered Pierce, as he got into the gig. “Take care, if you please, that my first half-year’s income is paid in advance, as we agreed it should be—a hundred

and fifty before the end of the month. You must not fail, if you please ; I have nothing to go on with. Good-bye."

And with these injunctions Pierce drove from Mossbank.

CHAPTER XIV.

BEFORE we follow Pierce More to London, there to pursue the course of his unprospering fortunes, we will pause, only for a moment, to take that farewell of Miss Bellerby which she so cruelly denied to her penitent offender.

A glance first at her father. Mr. Bellerby stood on the hall-steps till the gig had driven forth from the garden-gates, and had conveyed his late guest at least a mile on the way to the railway station. The attorney's

features were screwed up, as if he vainly hoped to keep in sight the two-wheeled vehicle and the departing traveller. His hand, raised above his knitted brow, shaded the light that dazzled his failing vision. But the gig, whose dust and whereabouts had, from the high position of the cottage, been perceptible for ten minutes after leaving his doors, was no longer visible.

Still he peered and looked in the direction of the station. Not even if Mr. Bellerby had been gifted with the eyes of Argus could he have seen the object it might be supposed he was looking after. A turn in the road, an intervening hill, had completely shut that object out. Still he looked and peered ; and what he strained his mind's gaze at, was fully as invisible as the gig behind the hill. Yes ! he strained to read the untraced pages of a future day—to tell the pointings of the giddy vane before the wind had blown ; forgetting that a short half-hour on Future's never-

trodden way, was as much beyond his divination as the change of countless ages.

Yet all of us, like Mr. Bellerby, think of the morrow only as part of to-day not yet come, though *almost* sure to come. Already we see it, with its train of things and nothings, just as we have looked upon its fellow many thousand times before ; and thus, in real uncertainty, cultivate an unreal certainty. We say: "As things have been, so shall they ever be;" "As it was in the beginning, so," &c. We say so, and think so, and think the idea that grew to will, that grew to action, that grew to past event, shall be the foretype of this now latest new idea.

That such things are because such things were, is a faithful proposition in the retrospect ; but that such things shall be because such things were, is the deceitful quicksand wherein thousands sink and perish. Because I live to-day, which yesterday was a morrow, shall I live to-morrow as certainly

as I have lived to-day? Yet is it said: "There is none so old, that hopeth not to live at least one day." But if perchance I live it *not*, my thousand schemes, all uncertain even *if* I live, are doubly ended if I die; and though now to me most important, would, but for my existence, be utterly without being or import of any kind.

Yet not because of uncertainty shall we trust to chance. Chance is a broken reed, whereon the blind predestinarian leans, as upon a broken staff; it is the weakest prop of weakness, the guide of fools, the pitfall of human frailty, the *laissez aller* of an impotent conscience; yea, the Broadway that leadeth to destruction. Chance, so called, may send the breeze, but chance is not the pilot. When left to chance, the odds are most in favour of a wreck, because the dangers outweigh the safety. Vigilance and faith, with purpose and resolve, must work what is to be, if it is to be.

So far, old man, you err not. But be not over sure that all your cunning will compass all your ends. Those straining looks are lightened, with an exulting grin. Beware! It is in common nature to see things easiest as our wishes paint them, not as Fate shall serve them to us.

Possibly Mr. Bellerby's thoughts may be conjectured—at least, the turn they were most likely to take while contemplating the departure of a person whose fortunes were so intimately connected with his own.

As a general rule, most people have, at certain periods in their lives, particular objects of interest which more or less enter into all the collateral interests then affecting them for good or bad. Not that the same sort of interests affect different people in the same way, but that almost all experience at some stage of their passage through life, the domination of one or other

of the prevailing passions. Whether it be the love of the sexes in the beginning, or the love of money at the end ; whether it be the love of straws and rattles in childhood, or the love of place and power in manhood, it matters not. Unless a man be a mere pipe for fortune to blow tunes on, or worse a thing which cannot be made even to vibrate to the air, in all likelihood he will know what it is to be the slave of some one passion—affection, aim, interest, object, or whatever she or he may please to call it.

Mr. Bellerby knew this, and had known it for many years past. The love of money had been the mainspring of every action, the nucleus of all his thoughts ; but, besides this ordinary passion, was one nearly as powerful, and infinitely more praiseworthy—the love for his daughter. It may be, this strong affection for his only child, was a principal cause of the origin, or at least the growth,

of his propensity to collect money and to hoard it.

These two absorbing interests, though nearly equipollent, and, as we have supposed, one of them partly owing its strength to the other, were yet of such opposite natures, as frequently to threaten mutual destruction. If the affection for his child had proposed to him a satisfactory end in laying by his wealth, the contemplation of that wealth had at last begotten so powerful a love for itself alone, that the questionable means whereby he often added to its store made him tremble lest his daughter should discover them.

His attention never reverted to Mary, without considering her as the only obstacle to the increase of his treasures; and he could not look upon his money, without feeling it to be a great barrier between him and the love for his daughter.

It usually happens when the mind is operated upon in two directions that the

opposing powers tend to neutralize each other's actions ; thus, one passion is weakened by another. Happiness is more alloyed when flowing from many sources ; and most of all, sorrow is diverted by a counter sorrow.

All who have suffered, are practically aware of this. We sometimes almost welcome a second cause of sorrow ; so much it steals away attention from the first. To use a plain simile, the additional burden gives us balance : as he who staggers under one full water-pail, walks steadily with two. There are, however, exceptions to such rules. For instance, when two evils are in such conjunction that each inflames instead of mitigating the other ; when the growth of one, instead of swallowing up, preserves an advancement in the other commensurate to its own.

Such, unhappily, was the case with Mr. Bellerby. Though one affection was innocent, the guilt of the other made a curse of both.

The more he loved his daughter the more inducement he had to act dishonourably for her aggrandizement. Could he have supposed that happiness flowed from any source but wealth, his temptation would have been less, and his own peace of mind greater.

The gig out of sight, and having, as he imagined, seen his way with tolerable clearness through the mazy windings of his projected schemes, he turned from the steps to hasten to Mary's room ; there, as he hoped, to learn the reason of her absence at the moment of More's departure ; a time, of all others, that rendered such an act most unaccountable.

To his first demand for admittance, he received reply that his daughter had a headache, and wished to remain quiet. Whether true or feigned, such a circumstance was not likely to assist him in making the discovery

upon which his curiosity was roused. He told Mary he wished to see her at once, and promised not to detain her above a minute or two.

“Now tell me, child,” said the old man as he entered his daughter’s apartment, and led her to the window, “what is the matter with you, Mary? Why wouldn’t you come down, my darling, to see our young friend off? Come, come, don’t cry, my pet. What has he been saying to you?”

Mary only sobbed, and stifled some words in her pocket-handkerchief, which she probably intended should not be intelligible to anybody.

“What say, my dear?” said her father, pricking up his ears, and bending forward his grey head to catch her meaning. “What was it he said to you, darling? Come tell me—you’ll tell your father,

won't you? Yes, I know you will; there's a dear!"

The old man waited for an answer, but still Mary did nothing but sob.

"There, there, don't cry so, my child. What is it he said?" but his coaxing was of no use, and appeared to have no other effect than to bring more tears to Mary's eyes. At last, Mr. Bellerby began to be impatient.

"Come, Mary dear! don't be so foolish. What is it the fellow said?"

"Nothing, father, nothing. Why do you tease me so? You see I am not well."

"But I know better," said the old man; "I know he has said something; and if I thought he had insulted you, Mary, I have the power"—and he clenched his hands, and spoke between his teeth—"I have the power to make him pay for it."

“Hush, father!” said Mary, suddenly struck with alarm, as if dreading some hidden meaning in his words. “Why do you talk in this way? Mr. More has not insulted me, and you have no reason to suppose anything of the kind.”

“Then why all this crying? And why wouldn’t you let him speak with you for five minutes? Who knows what he had to say? I’ll answer for it, he wanted to make a proposition for your hand, and through your obstinacy”—and here the old man saw all his schemes frustrated at a blow, and called to mind still more urgent reasons for the match he had laboured to bring about, “through your obstinacy and perverseness, you have ruined the whole concern. Ruined! Ay, you don’t know what you have done!” and he let go her hand, and stamped about the room in a frenzy.

“Father, dear father!” she exclaimed, going up to him and putting her arm round his neck, “what has happened to you? Why do you talk in that strange way? You frighten me so. There must be some mistake. He—Mr. More, never said anything—never hinted at—nothing could be further from his thoughts, or from mine, I am sure, than—than—”

“Don’t tell me, child. Do you think I am blind. Do you think I couldn’t see through him. Ha! ha! I know what makes you cry. You know him as well as I do—the fine gentleman, forsooth. He loves you, Mary, and has told you so, I dare say.”

—“Sir! Father!”—

“And has told you,” he went on, not heeding the interruption, “that Mr. More, of Moreton, the descendant of one of the proudest families in England, can’t marry

an attorney's daughter; and so he comes here to amuse himself by trifling with her affections, and goes off with the determination never to come back again. But I'll be even with him, the scoundrel! I know where the shoe pinches, and we shall see whether he can insult me with impunity."

"Father, he has not insulted you. You accuse him wrongfully. He has been most unfortunate, and his misfortunes may have taught him to be distrustful of others. If, in thought, he wronged you, he is too sensible not to discover his error, and too generous not to own it when he has discovered it."

"And so," said Mr. Bellerby, turning sharply, and glaring furiously at his daughter, "and so you take upon yourself to defend him, do you? You take his part against your father, do you? You justify his con-

duct, and pretend he has not insulted me, when I tell you that he said to my face he suspected me of roguery ! You call this no insult, and dare attempt to screen him. You ! for whom I have drivelled away my existence—grinding myself to dust—denying myself every comfort, and doing such things as would justify the worst of his suspicions. Ay ! you may groan, ungrateful minx ! There was but one way I had left to wipe out the disgrace of what I have done for you ; and you have thwarted me.”

“ For God’s sake,” said Mary, placing her hand upon her father’s mouth, “ say no more. You have worked yourself into a passion. You are saying what you do not mean—you—”

“ No, by God, I am not ! ’Tis enough to break my heart ;” and here his passion found

a vent in tears. "But I am a miserable old man, and you think you can do what you like with me; but he shan't. He's a gull—a fool. Old as I am, I am more than a match for him. He shan't insult me, nor trifle with your affections, for nothing. There, let me go," he said, pushing aside his daughter, and leaving the room; then turning back, "I spoke in a passion, Mary," he added; "don't remember what I said. I spoke in a passion. I didn't mean to say you were ungrateful, child. No, no, I spoke too hastily. You need not be afraid of your father doing anything you would be ashamed of. No, no, he loves you too much, Mary. Come, kiss me, my child. I—I spoke in a passion. Forget what I said; forget all about it, Mary."

So saying, he embraced his daughter, and left the room.

When alone, Mary's first act was an act of disobedience; but her disobedience was involuntary. For her own sake, as well as for her father's, she would gladly have forgotten all he had said; but she could not forget it. His words, it was true, were spoken in anger, and in after calmness he had contradicted them; still they were words of such deep meaning, of such vast importance, that, whether true or not, they betrayed the existence of those thoughts from which they sprung—thoughts that had floated through Mary's mind before, but now were anchored there by the accidental confirmation of her father's angry and unguarded expressions.

His object on entering her room had been to seek an explanation of her sudden change with regard to Pierce More. She had refused to give this explanation—indeed, it

was impossible she could have done otherwise. Her father had then interpreted her conduct from his own impressions, and had assigned reasons for it which both surprised and wounded her. Above all, that which had most alarmed her, and had sunk deepest into her heart, were the threats her father had uttered, and the allusions he let fall concerning certain acts done, as he said, for her advantage, but to his dishonour.

Reviewing the conversation in the order of its occurrence, these interrogatories suggested themselves to her. Was it then so evident to her father that Mr. More had such intentions? that he liked her so much? Was it the least probable that, in requesting the five minutes' interview, he had anything particular to say to her? or was it not more likely that her father should be right in his other

supposition, that Mr. More had been—not trifling, but had gone away determined never to come back, because he was too proud to marry an attorney's daughter? Surely no thought of the kind ever entered his head? Impossible!—it was unjust! But how angry it had made her father! This it was that put him in such a passion, this it was that made him suppose Mr. More had insulted him, and then her trying to explain only irritated him ten times worse. Why did she say anything? How could she be so foolish, so inconsiderate? She ought to have known how violent it made her dear father to contradict him; still she felt sure he had accused Mr. More wrongfully; and if so, was it not her duty to speak? But what could her father mean by saying Mr. More had told him to his face that he suspected him of—”

Here Mary turned pale, and looked to see whether any one was in the room to detect her thoughts.

“Oh, no! it could not be!” she said, shuddering as she remembered her father’s words; “‘I have done such things as would justify More’s worst suspicions.’ It could not be. My father knew not what he was saying—and such threats, too! O God! what dreadful meaning could he have?”

Mary pressed her hands against her forehead, as if to drive away these terrible thoughts; but the more she tried to drive them away, the more forcibly they recurred to her.

They reminded her of Pierce’s sudden astonishment and looks of suspicion when he read Winter’s name on the piece of music; they reminded her of his saying her father

was too nearly connected with such a villain as Winter for an honourable man ; they reminded her of Winter's desperate character, of his late unusual visits, of the hitherto unexplained absence of Taylor, of More's ruin, of her father's trips to Moreton, of his close application to business, of his evident anxiety for her marriage, and finally of the dark consequences to which he alluded as the penalty of her having thwarted his wishes and More's advances.

She became bewildered at length with the confusion of painful reflections that crowded upon her. She dared not attempt to fathom them. Her father must be mistaken about More—More must be mistaken about her father ; Winter was the most shocking villain she had ever heard of, and she herself was partly to blame for everything.

Such, in plain terms, is the nearest solu-

tion we can give of the unsatisfactory conclusion she gradually arrived at. To make further discoveries, to set her own mind at rest by clearing up the mist which had settled upon her father's character, was the work of many weeks.

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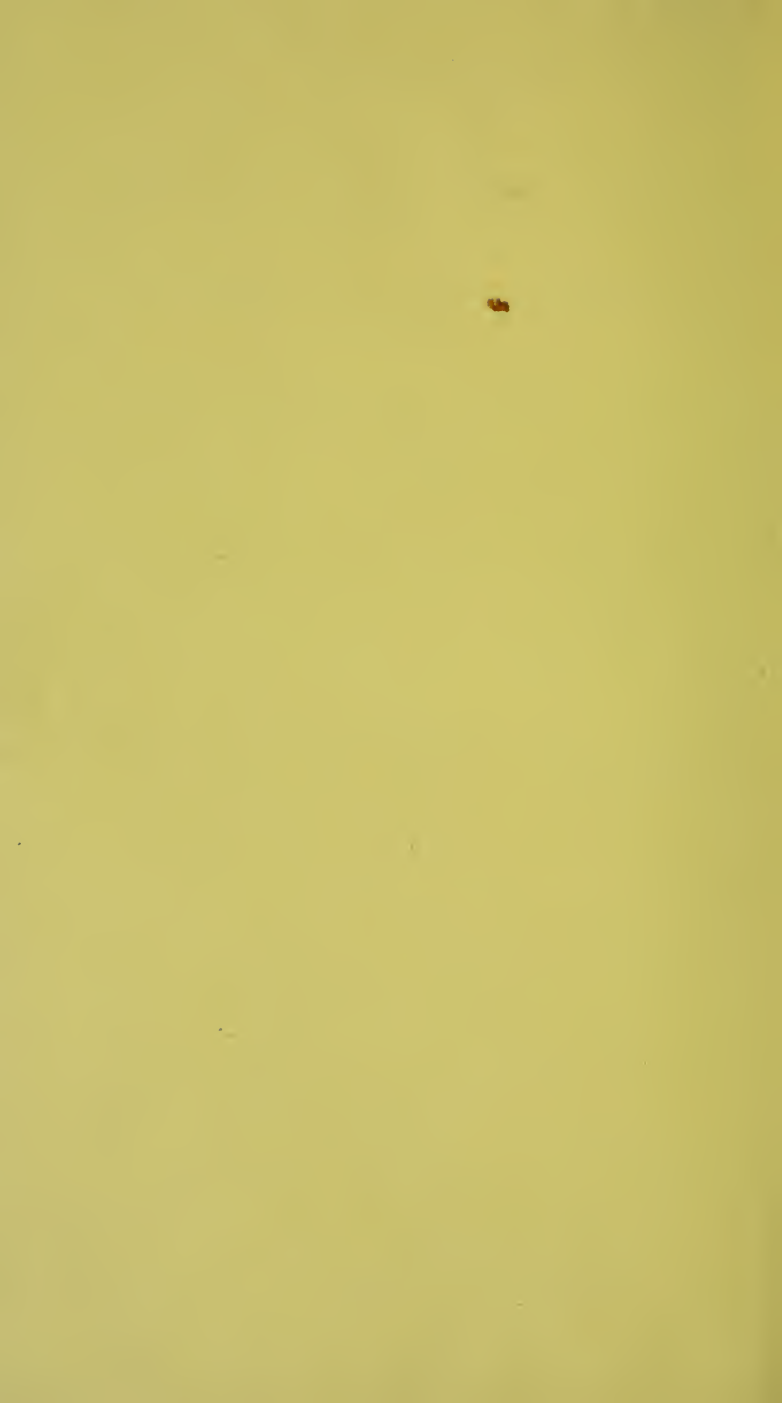
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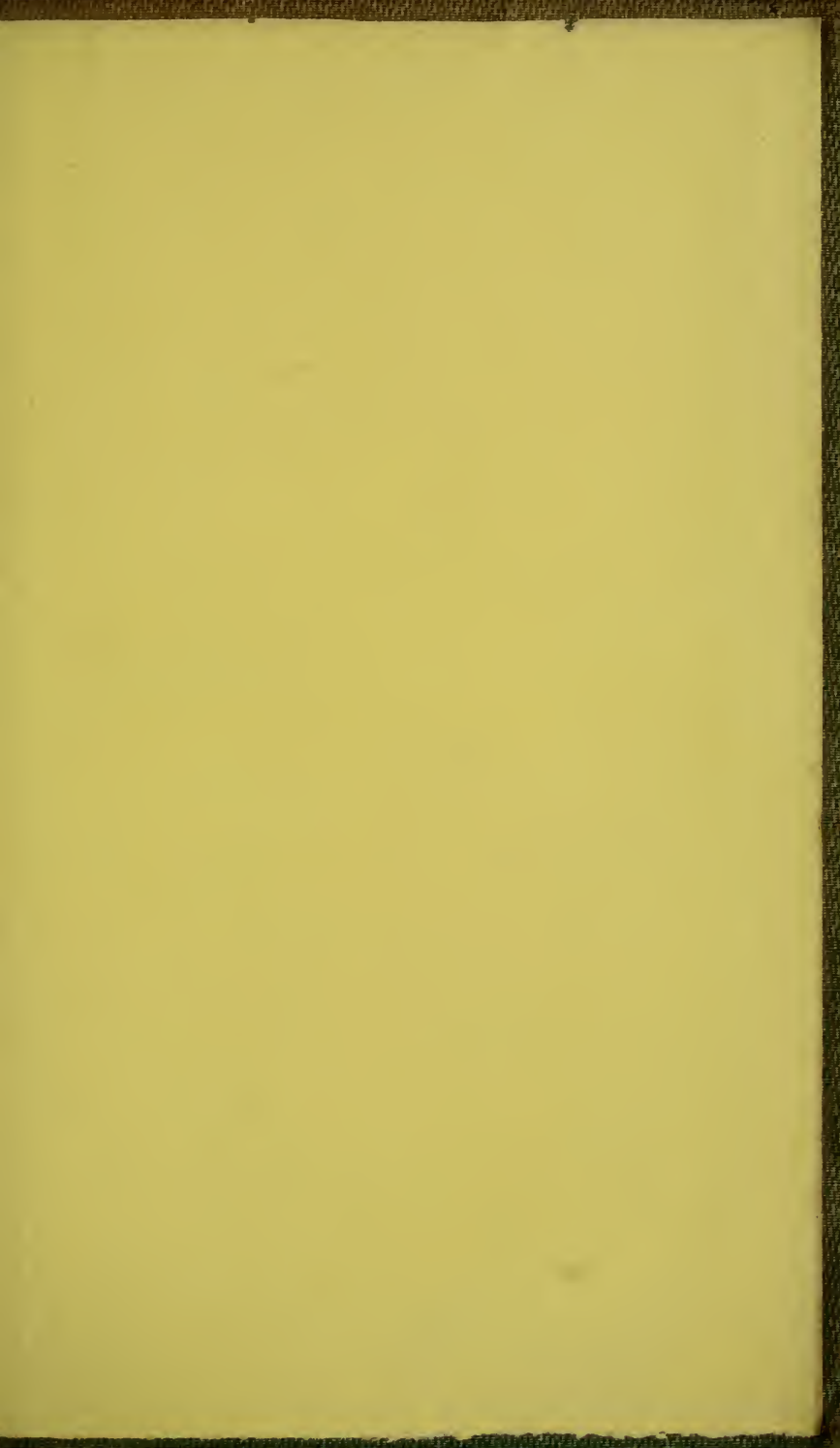
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